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**THE DARDANELLES CAMPAIGN – FAILURE THROUGH  
STRATEGIC INDECISION**

BY

**LIEUTENANT COLONEL THOMAS L. CARIKER**  
United States Marine Corps

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by

Lieutenant Colonel Thomas L. Cariker  
United States Marine Corps

Colonel Brian Moore, USMC (ret.)  
Project Advisor

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## ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Thomas L. Cariker (LtCol), USMC

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At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the United States faces a strategic paradox: as our national strategy relies increasingly on military engagement and intervention, our forward basing and presence is decreasing. This reality, combined with shifting of populations and centers of gravity to the littorals and proliferation of anti-access strategies, makes power projection and operational maneuver from the sea a strategically relevant capability. As we prepare for the eventuality of projecting power from the sea, the lessons of the Dardanelles campaign during World War I offers invaluable insight on the feasibility of the employment of amphibious forces in pursuit of current strategic goals. Using a cause and effect model, this study examines the impact of strategic decisions on the national, theater, and operational level during the Dardanelles campaign. It also explores the campaign's influence on subsequent amphibious doctrine and the implications for Operational Maneuver from the Sea (OMFTS) and Ship-to-Objective Maneuver (STOM).



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## THE DARDANELLES CAMPAIGN: FAILURE THROUGH STRATEGIC INDECISION

The struggle will be heavy, the risks numerous, the losses cruel; but victory, when it comes, will make amends for all. There never was a great subsidiary operation of war in which a more complete harmony of strategic, political, and economic advantages has combined, or which stood in truer relation to the main decision which is in the central theatre. Through the Narrows of the Dardanelles and across the ridges of the Gallipoli Peninsula lie some of the shortest paths to a triumphant peace. — Winston Churchill, 1915<sup>1</sup>

On the cold night of 9 January 1916, the remnants of a force, which during the previous nine months totaled over 480,000 men quietly left Cape Helles on the southern tip of the Gallipoli peninsula. In its wake it left the hubris of a failed attempt at strategic decision; 285,000 British, French, Australian and New Zealand casualties (145,000 killed), 250,000 Turkish losses (86,000 killed), tons of war material, and the reputation of the British Empire. Such was the ignominious conclusion of England's great gamble - the Dardanelles or Gallipoli campaign, a campaign as noted for its strategic vision as its fatally flawed plans and heroically fought battles.

The campaign was conceptually strategic and daring. Its goals, if realized, would have arguably hastened the end of the war. The expedition had every promise of success if planned and executed as a campaign that linked military mission with strategic goals and was supported with adequate resources. But, Great Britain's political, military and naval leaders, who were never in full agreement, drifted into a decision and then executed a complex amphibious operation without a comprehensive plan, then proceeded to fight it on the cheap. This study examines the Dardanelles campaign from a strategic and theater perspective and analyzes critical decisions and their subsequent impact on the campaign. The analysis will focus on six critical elements of the campaign: the strategic environment, the decision, the naval phase, the first landings, the second landings, and the withdrawal.

### HOME BY CHRISTMAS – THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT.

“Oh, these things are usually over in a few months!” — Admiral Sir Reginald Custance, Royal Navy, 1 August 1914, replying to a question concerning the length of the newly declared War with Germany.

Immediately following the outbreak of World War I in August 1914, the major combatants anticipated that the war would be over by Christmas one way or another.<sup>2</sup> However, operational initiative and momentum were quickly lost on both the Eastern and Western Fronts — so it became increasingly obvious that the war would not end as quickly as anticipated.

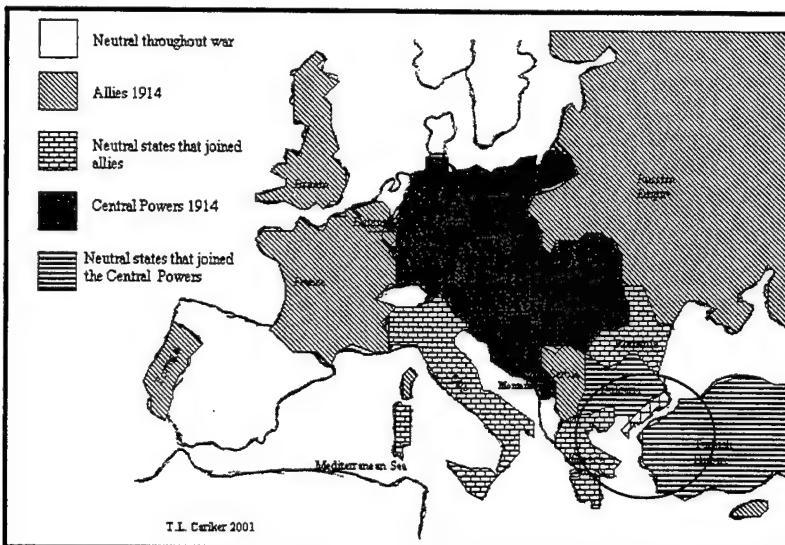


FIGURE 1 - WWI ALLIANCES, 1 AUGUST 1914

During the early weeks of the war, the precarious and uncertain strategic landscape consisted of three strategic camps: the Central Powers, the Triple Entente, and strategically positioned neutral countries. (Figure 1). At the outbreak of war, The Central Powers consisted of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Turkey, in a defensive hedge against Russia, signed a secret

defensive alliance with Germany in July 1914. However, although not formally allied with Germany and despite continuing talks with Great Britain, Turkey was already a de facto member of the Central Powers. England, France, Russia, and Serbia immediately allied against the Central Powers in observance of pre-war agreements. The strategic wild cards remained - Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania, all four of which would become crucial players when Turkey formally joined the Central Powers on 29 October 1914.

Great Britain's first of several strategic missteps involving Turkey, which ironically contributed to the ultimate necessity of the Dardanelles campaign, occurred when she ignored her political element of power in a headlong rush to use military power. At the outbreak of war, England was constructing two dreadnaughts for the Turkish Government, the Sultan Osman and the Reshadie.<sup>3</sup> These ships were purchased with funds largely donated by Turkish peasants; they represented not only Turkish sea power and military might, but, more importantly, national and Islamic pride. England, desperate for capital ships, immediately seized the almost completed dreadnaughts for her own Navy thereby alienating what could have been a strategic ally—Turkey. Germany immediately capitalized on this blunder by “donating” two of its armored cruisers, the Goeben and Breslau, forcibly consigned to the Black Sea by England's marauding Mediterranean squadrons, crew, guns, and all.<sup>4</sup> England's poor ambassadorship and Germany's skillful political maneuvering in Constantinople prior to war, combined with the dreadnaught fiasco and Turkey's fear of Russia, all but drove Turkey to ally with the Central Powers. This situation compelled England to protect her Mideast interests and the Suez Canal against Turkey with men and resources desperately needed in France. This

was the strategic reality facing Great Britain's War Council in the fall of 1914 as it searched for alternatives to an increasingly moribund Western Front and uncertain Eastern Front. Hence the seeds of the Dardanelles campaign were sown.

### **EAST VS. WEST – THE PLAN**

No one who has not had to take these decisions can know how serious and painful are the stresses which search everyman's heart when he knows that an order is going to be given as a result of which great ships may be lost, great interests may be permanently ruined, and thousands of men sent to their last account. — Winston Churchill, Speech to the House of Commons on his Dardanelles involvement, March 20, 1917

The Dardanelles "Campaign" was not planned as a sequential, combined, joint operation that would seize operational objectives with strategic implications. Rather, it evolved from an economy-of-force effort intended to break the stalemate developing in France, with the promise of strategic decision that would contribute to ending the war in 1916. During the formulation of alternative plans, two major factors contributed to the genesis of the campaign and its subsequent unfolding. First were the personalities and composition of the British War Council, and the second were the availability and prioritization of forces.

The British War Council evolved from the peacetime Imperial Defence Committee in October 1914 to streamline the decision-making process and thus facilitate prosecution of the War. The War Council was a committee of the Cabinet, with naval and military expertise added in an advisory role.<sup>5</sup> However, the daily conduct of the war was in the hands of Prime Minister Asquith; Secretary of War Lord Kitchener; and Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty. The imposing personality of Lord Kitchener dominated this "inner trinity" of ministers.<sup>6</sup> Churchill later testified before Dardanelles Commission:

When he gave a decision it was invariably accepted as final. He was never, to my belief, overruled by the War Council or the Cabinet in any military matter, great or small... Scarcely anyone ever ventured to argue with him in council... All powerful, imperturbable, reserved, he dominated absolutely our counsels at this time.<sup>7</sup>

The War Council's ostensible purpose was to advise the Cabinet, which was supposedly the decision making body. But, in reality it made and carried out its own decisions. This loss of checks and balances, at the strategic decision-making level, contributed to England's "drifting" into the Gallipoli fiasco.

Winston Churchill quickly grasped the implications of the deteriorating strategic situation and its possible impact. As a converted disciple of his First Sea Lord, Admiral Jackie Fisher,

Churchill believed the British army was a "projectile" to be fired by the Royal Navy. He thus embraced Great Britain's traditional use of sea power as a force multiplier and a means of leveraging the relatively small size of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). Churchill, Fisher, and their supporters were referred to as "Easterners" because of their penchant for peripheral strategies that diverted resources from the Western Front. This camp was at odds with Kitchener and his "western" supporters of the continental strategy of deploying a mass army to fight alongside France in Western Europe. This east-west tug of war would hobble the campaign from its inception.

The Admiralty contemplated several plans to capitalize on the power of the Royal Navy. Fisher favored a Baltic invasion to strike at Germany's heart, while Churchill proposed a cross channel amphibious landing to flank the German lines.<sup>8</sup> Churchill also entertained the prospect of controlling the Dardanelles as a way to influence Turkey as early as 1 September 1914, when he privately wrote General Douglas, Chief of the Imperial General Staff:

I arranged with Lord Kitchener yesterday that two officers from the Admiralty should meet two officers from the Director of Military Operations (D.M.O.), Department of War office to-day to examine and work out a plan for the seizure, by means of a Greek army of adequate strength, of the Gallipoli Peninsula, with a view to admitting a British Fleet to the sea of Mamora.<sup>9</sup>



FIGURE 2 -  
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

This is the first time that Great Britain considered seizing the Dardanelles or Gallipoli as a means of affecting the situation in the East and putting pressure on the Central Powers. Greece, a neutral country, declined to become involved with this plan and the Gallipoli idea temporarily faded into the background.<sup>10</sup> Winston Churchill revived his Dardanelles strategy when Turkey declared war on Great Britain on 31 October 1914. On 3 November, two days after Great Britain declared war on Turkey, Admiral Carden, the newly appointed Commander of the Eastern

Mediterranean Squadron, on Churchill's orders, bombarded the outer forts guarding the entrance of the Dardanelles to "test the range of the Turkish guns."<sup>11</sup> This action was the first of a long series of uncoordinated military and political actions that would plague the Dardanelles campaign. The expenditure of eighty naval shells did little damage to the forts but signaled to the Turks, and their German advisors, that the Dardanelles was much on the minds of Great

Britain's leaders. This incident prompted the Turks, under the forceful guidance of the head of the German Military Mission, General Otto Liman Von Sanders, to evaluate defenses and begin improvements.

In the fall of 1914, Winston Churchill used developments in the Middle East to recommend a demonstration of some kind on the Turkish coast, "even if it were just a feint," as a means of protecting Egypt. On 25 November, during the first meeting of the new War Council, Churchill, with the "hearty concurrence" of Fisher, recommended a joint attack on the Gallipoli peninsula as the "ideal method" for defending Egypt.<sup>12</sup> Kitchener rejected the idea because of non-availability of troops. When Churchill pressed to assemble transport for possible future contingencies, Kitchener closed discussions by replying that he would give the Admiralty "full notice" when the time was right to consider a plan of this type.<sup>13</sup>

The strategy of seizing the Dardanelles as a step towards taking Constantinople was not a new one. And historical studies were not encouraging. Admiral Phipps Hornby warned the Foreign Secretary in 1878, during the Russo-Turkish war, "If the Russians occupied Gallipoli Peninsula with mobile guns he would be unable to keep the straits open for transports, colliers and supply ships. Not all the fleets in the world could keep the Dardanelles open for passage of such vessels without troops."<sup>14</sup> In 1890, Lord George Hamilton, Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean wrote that "even if by a rush past at night the squadron succeeded in reaching the Sea of Marmara without serious injury, its position would be hazardous in the extreme."<sup>15</sup> In a 1906 study the General Staff of the War office concluded "military opinion, looking at the question from the point of view of coast defense, will be in entire agreement with the naval view that unaided action by the fleet, bearing in mind the risks involved, is much to be deprecated."<sup>16</sup>

At the close of 1914, Russia's military situation was deteriorating rapidly. She was resisting Hindenburg's frontal attack towards Warsaw while Turkish forces in the Caucasus threatened her flanks and rear.<sup>17</sup> On 2 January 1915, The British ambassador in Petrograd received a telegram from the Russian Government requesting a demonstration against the Turks to relieve pressure on the Russian Army in the Caucasus.<sup>18</sup> Lord Kitchener's memorandum to Churchill on 2 January 1915 demurred:

I do not see that we can do anything that will very seriously help the Russians in the Caucasus. ...We have no troops to land anywhere...The only place that a demonstration might have some effect in stopping reinforcements from going east would be the Dardanelles.... We shall not be ready for anything big for months.<sup>19</sup>

Churchill, who had always planned to use military forces [army] in his peripheral strategies, took Kitchener's lead in recommending the Dardanelles, given the fact that no troops were

forthcoming, to embrace the Navy-only approach. On 3 January, Kitchener, without the concurrence of the Cabinet or the War Council, unilaterally committed Great Britain to action in this telegram: "Please assure the Grand Duke that steps will be taken to make a demonstration against the Turks."<sup>20</sup>

First Sea Lord Jackie Fisher, always ready to use England's maritime might, immediately presented a "Turkey Plan" that had been prepared by himself and Lieutenant - Colonel Maurice Hankey, Secretary, Committee for Imperial Defence. The complicated plan called for a British troops released from the Western Front to land at Besika Bay on Asiatic Turkey, with Greek forces taking Gallipoli, Bulgarians seizing Constantinople, while Russia, Serbia, and Rumania attacked Austria.<sup>21</sup> Fisher, who would later be accused of retreating on his position of forcing the Dardanelles using only naval forces, embraced the plan and committed several obsolete battleships. His concurrence is indisputable: "The naval advantages of the possession of Constantinople and the getting of wheat from the Black Sea are so overwhelming that I consider Col Hankey's plan for the Turkish operation vital and imperative and very pressing."<sup>22</sup> Fisher's commitment of obsolete battleships to force the straits during a combined naval and military operation was used *carte blanche* by Churchill when troops were once again denied and the use of naval forces alone remained the only option.

## **FORCING THE STRAITS – THE NAVAL PHASE**

"The Admiralty should prepare for a Naval Expedition in February to bombard and take the Gallipoli Peninsula with Constantinople as its objective." — Decision of the War Council, 13 January 1915

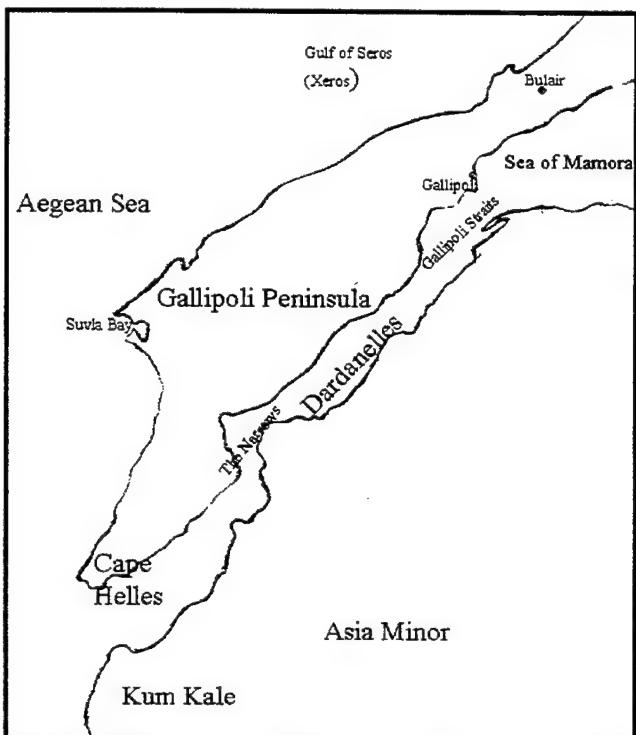
As dispatches flew between England and Russia, Churchill queried Vice Admiral Sir Sackville Carden and Admiral Sir Henry Jackson, Admiralty Staff, concerning the feasibility of forcing the straits with naval forces alone. Admiral Carden estimated that the straits could not be rushed, but could be forced by "extended operations with a large number of ships."<sup>23</sup> Jackson, who opposed the sans troops plan, accurately pointed out "the capture of Constantinople would be worth a considerable loss; but its bombardment alone would not greatly affect the distant military operations; and if it surrendered it could not be occupied and held without troops."<sup>24</sup> Having committed the Crown to action, Kitchener, in spite of his own assessment of the need for 150,000 troops to secure the Gallipoli Peninsula, reported to the War Council that seizing the Dardanelles with naval forces was the most "suitable military objective."<sup>25</sup>

On 11 January, Vice Admiral Carden proposed a four stage naval operation to "force" the straits: Phase 1 called for the destruction of the defenses at the entrance to the Dardanelles, also referred to as the "outer forts." Phase 2 included action inside the straits to clear defenses up to the "Narrows." Phase 3 called for the destruction of defenses of the Narrows. Phase 4 included sweeping a channel through the minefields and advance through the Narrows, followed by a reduction of the forts further up, and advance into the Sea of Marmara. He estimated it would take a month to carry out the entire operation.<sup>26</sup>

Churchill eloquently articulated Carden's plan to the Cabinet noting the strategic advantages of seizing the Dardanelles and subsequent capture of Constantinople as a means to defeat Turkey; to assist the Russians; to secure the alliance of Greece, Italy, and Romania; and to allow the transport of Russian wheat and Allied munitions through the Black Sea.<sup>27</sup> His personal experience of watching giant German howitzers reduce the Belgian forts at Liege, along with the overstated success of the November bombardments, helped convinced himself and the War Council that a modest force of obsolescent dreadnoughts could force a strategic decision. Desperately seeking a break in the stalemate in the west, the War Council rushed to embrace the plan but failed to ask how forcing the straits would lead to Constantinople's capture or fall—or once the straits were forced, how they would maintain the flow of logistics unless a force was landed to secure the peninsula.

Churchill's efforts came to fruition on 13 January, when the War Council directed the Admiralty to prepare for a naval expedition in February to seize the Gallipoli Peninsula with the goal of taking Constantinople. Churchill used this directive to conduct an expedition. He immediately began making preparations.

There were two significant political advantages of a Navy-only option: Kitchener would not have to depart from his obligation of supporting the French on the Western Front. Also, if the expedition were unsuccessful, it would be easier to break off a naval attack than to evacuate ground troops, and do so without loss of prestige.<sup>28</sup> Kitchener suggested that the "plan was worth trying" and that "we could leave off the bombardment if it did not prove effective."<sup>29</sup> Although Churchill's initial insistence on troops had been denied, the War Council continued to debate the advisability of using the army in support of the naval plan during the remainder of January and early February. As the debate matured, the necessity of committing ground forces, even if only to secure forts after bombardment, attracted more support. On 28 January 1915, the War Council made its final decision to conduct the attack on Turkish defenses guarding the Dardanelles using the Royal Navy to reduce the forts and landing its Marine detachments to complete their destruction.



The Dardanelles is forty-one miles long and flows from the Sea of Marmara to Cape Helles in the Aegean Sea (Figure 3). The Gallipoli Peninsula forms its north shore, is about fifty miles long, and varies in width from two to twelve miles. The peninsula is rocky and cut by ravines and hills, rising in places to over 700 feet. Asiatic Turkey, or Asia Minor, forms its south shore. The strait is divided into three sections each with defensive emplacements. 1) The entrance is about ten miles long and two miles wide at Cape Helles, with a maximum width of four miles. 2) The Narrows is less than a mile wide. 3) The upper portion is

twenty miles long and averages four miles wide; it empties into the Sea of Marmara.

The defenses of the Dardanelles were comprised of 150 fixed and mobile guns from 6 to 14 inch in caliber. They made maximum use of the terrain and the natural canalization as ships approached the Narrows. The Turks had further enhanced defenses with mine belts sown across the straits, reinforced with shore-launched torpedoes. Any naval plan to "force the straits" had to address these threats.

Admiral Carden's force consisted of 12 battleships, 3 battle cruisers, 3 light cruisers, 16 destroyers, 6 submarines, 12 minesweepers and scores of auxiliary craft.<sup>30</sup> His plan included the four phases outlined in his dispatch to Churchill on 3 January, with the reduction of the forts in each phase being accomplished in three steps. The first step was to stand out of counter fire range and shell the forts with large caliber fire from battleships, including the newly commissioned, 15 inch gunned, super-dreadnought HMS Queen Elizabeth. After suppressing the guns, the ships would move closer and engage the forts again with secondary armament. Finally, the ships would close in to point blank range and smother the forts with overwhelming gunfire to complete their destruction.<sup>31</sup> After silencing the forts, forces would land to effect any remaining destruction, and minesweepers would sweep the channel preparing the way for the next phase.

When the War Council finalized its decision on 25 January, Churchill began assembling his forces for an attack to force the Dardanelles. The French agreed to support the expedition with 4 battleships and their auxiliaries under the command of Admiral Guepratte.<sup>32</sup> Forces began deploying to the Aegean Sea; tentatively bombardment of the outer forts would commence on 18 February 1915. No sooner had naval forces deployed than the political leaders, once again, began to waiver on a naval-only option, continuing their “drift” into a military attack. Even Lord Kitchener began to reconsider the use of troops. Two significant events altered the “expediency” with which the operation was being forwarded and mitigating Kitchener’s steadfast refusal to supply troops. The first occurred on 4 January when Turkish Defense Minister Enver Pasha’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Army was defeated by the Russians at the battle of Sarikamish, destroying the 9th, 10th, and 11th Turkish Corps.<sup>33</sup> This loss ironically removed the threat to Russia, which has been one of the original rationales for the action. The second was the failure of a Turkish drive to seize the Suez Canal, which freed up British forces assigned to defend Egypt. Had Great Britain considered these two circumstances in planning the Gallipoli campaign the outcome might have been different.

By mid-February, the principal policymakers agreed that an amphibious landing would be required, but were uncertain of its scope. Kitchener allowed to the War Council on 9 February, “If Navy forces required the assistance of the land forces at a latter stage, that assistance would be forthcoming.”<sup>34</sup> On 16 February, two days before the initial attack on the forts, the War Council informed the Cabinet of the impending attack and directed the 29<sup>th</sup> Division to proceed to the island of Lemnos, off the coast of the Gallipoli peninsula, to assist the Marines in reducing the forts and later to occupy Constantinople. On the same day, Churchill directed Rear Admiral Roslyn Wemyss to establish an intermediate Naval base in port Mudros on Lemnos to support Admiral Carden’s operation. The War Council’s belated notification to the Cabinet and its decision to establish a major naval support base and position landing forces only two days before commencing large-scale operations are indicative of the poor coordination and planning that had already become the hallmark of the entire campaign.

#### FIRST ATTACK, 19 FEB 1915.

Amid the growing confusion and uncertainty of the political situation in London, Admiral Carden ordered the first phase of forcing the Dardanelles to begin. At 9:51 AM, the HMS Cornwallis opened fire with its 12-inch main batteries on Fort Orkanie in Asiatic Turkey, beginning long-range reduction of the outer forts.<sup>35</sup> The attack began well as the ships received no counterfire from the Turkish batteries. At mid-afternoon Carden ordered several ships to

close with the forts to continue the attack. By 1630, as ships closed to examine the forts for damage and deliver more accurate fire, the Turkish batteries responded with ineffective counterfire, which failed to damage any ships but succeeded in destroying Churchill's erroneous assumption that the effects of German howitzers against Belgian forts were somehow comparable to naval gunfire against coastal defenses. Carden reported that "the results of the day's action on the 19<sup>th</sup> of February showed apparently the effect of long range bombardment by direct fire on modern earthworks is slight."<sup>36</sup> Carden ordered a retreat at dusk fearing German submarine attack.

The first phase was moderately successful and would have been moreso if overwhelming force had been applied. In all, only four of twelve capital ships were principal participants in the first day of bombardment: the Cornwallis, Suffren, Inflexible, and Triumph, with two others acting as spotters.<sup>37</sup> This failure to apply decisive force at the decisive time and place became a harbinger of things to come. Poor weather prevented the renewal of the attack until 25 February when the fleet, now joined by the Queen Elizabeth, again attacked the four forts guarding the entrance to the straits. Carden, using lessons learned from the first attempt, moved his secondary bombardment ships closer to decisively engage the forts under covering fire of the battleships. The shelling succeeded in silencing the forts long enough to commence minesweeping operations at night. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, following another day of bad weather, Marines and sailors were landed to destroy the guns that remained serviceable in the four outer forts. Parties landed in Asiatic Turkey to reduce the forts in Kum Kale and Orhanie and on the Gallipoli peninsula to destroy Fort Sedd el Barh.<sup>38</sup> Ironically, these landing parties stood on ground that in two months time would have to be retaken at a terrible cost in allied lives.

The political and military impact of the fall of the outer forts seemed to fulfill Churchill's prediction that the engagement promised major strategic gains. Turkish leaders in Constantinople feared a breakthrough and made plans for the evacuation of the Sultan and his Court. Italy began negotiations with the Allies, and Greece offered an army Corps, which was vetoed by the Russians.<sup>39</sup> However, the euphoria was short lived as the naval force advanced towards the Narrows and met stiffer resistance, both at sea and ashore. Now that Great Britain had begun its attack, it had essentially two options for continuing the operation. First, she could acknowledge existing commitments elsewhere and withdraw if the naval-only attack began to falter. Second, she could accept risk elsewhere and acknowledge the need for a large well-coordinated joint attack. Unfortunately, the War Council adopted neither of these courses of action and continued to supply resources piecemeal.<sup>40</sup>

Throughout February and early March, pressure for ground forces continued to grow. On 18 February, Kitchener, under pressure from French Generals on the Western Front, without notifying anyone, unilaterally countermanded his original deployment order committing the 29<sup>th</sup> Division. Instead, he prepared to commit Australian and New Zealand forces currently in Egypt, under the Command of General Birdwood, to assist the Marines in supporting operations. After receiving reports from General Birdwood, that, in his estimation, the Navy could not force the straits without assistance, Kitchener decided to send the 29<sup>th</sup> Division after all and convinced France to send a division as well. By 10 March, after allowing three precious weeks to slip away, Kitchener had assembled and army corps of about 70,000 men in theater.<sup>41</sup> His decision to withhold the 29<sup>th</sup> Division for a month was a central issue in the ensuing controversy over the campaign.

To lead this assembling corps, Kitchener sent for General Sir Ian Hamilton and informed him: "We are sending a military force to support the fleet now at the Dardanelles and you are to have command"<sup>42</sup> After meeting with Kitchener, Hamilton immediately realized that the War Department did not have a plan or any estimate of the number of troops necessary to conduct the campaign successfully. What he did get was guidance that clearly indicated that the War Council had not decided on the scope of military operations.<sup>43</sup> Kitchener's guidance stipulated:

1. The use of military forces is only contemplated if the fleet fails, and only after every effort has been exhausted.
2. Do not attempt any landing until all forces have assembled. You will not land on the Asiatic side.
3. Once started, there will be no abandoning the operation, and avoid a stalemate at all costs.
4. You can use forces for minor operations in support of the fleet, but do not permanently occupy the peninsula.

Hamilton asked Kitchener if he contemplated a landing on Gallipoli peninsula, to which he replied, "I do not expect you to do it at all. I hope to get through without it."<sup>44</sup> This guidance strongly influenced Hamilton and hamstrung him from seizing the initiative and securing key areas of the peninsula with forces readily available before Turkish defenses were improved.

The Gallipoli Peninsula was poorly defended through 1914, even after Churchill's ill-advised bombardment in November. During the early bombardments in February, the defense of the Dardanelles was very decentralized. Turkish Admiral Usedom assumed general command; and Colonel Djevad Bei, Commandant of the Dardanelles, commanded forces in the south of the peninsula and Asiatic Turkey coast defenses. General Liman Von Sanders, Commander of the Turkish First Army, commanded troops in the center and to the north of Gallipoli. Turkish HQ's plan called for the 1st Army to defend the north shore of the straits and

the 2nd army the southern side (Asiatic Turkey). This plan neglected the outer defenses and the coastlines and left the peninsula vulnerable to attack on the Aegean side.<sup>45</sup> If allied troops had been available at this time and landed in coordination with naval forces, Churchill's vision would certainly have come to fruition.

Churchill, annoyed at the slow progress of naval operations, pressured Admiral Carden into action when he telegraphed: "If success cannot be obtained without loss of ships and men, results to be gained are important enough to justify such a loss.... Every well conceived action for forcing a decision, even should regrettable losses be entailed, will receive our support."<sup>46</sup> That support was severely put to the test a week later. On 17 March, Admiral Carden resigned his command due to illness and was replaced by his second-in-command, Vice-Admiral John De Robeck. The following day, the new commander began an attack that would change the whole course of the campaign.

Admiral De Robeck decided to attack the defenses at the Narrows with ten battleships organized in three groups. The attack would commence with group A consisting of *HMS Queen Elizabeth*, *Inflexible*, *Lord Nelson*, and *Agamemnon*. After the forts were subdued, line B, consisting of the French squadron, would pass line A and engage at decisive range. Two

remaining battleships would concentrate on mobile howitzers and minefield batteries.

The shelling began and early reports were encouraging. At 1100 Line B moved forward to decisively engage the forts and began receiving return fire. Several ships sustained minor damage but with few casualties. At 1330 the shore fire slackened and the French Squadron was recalled. At 1354 *Bouvet*, following the flagship out of the straits, struck a line of floating mines and sank within three

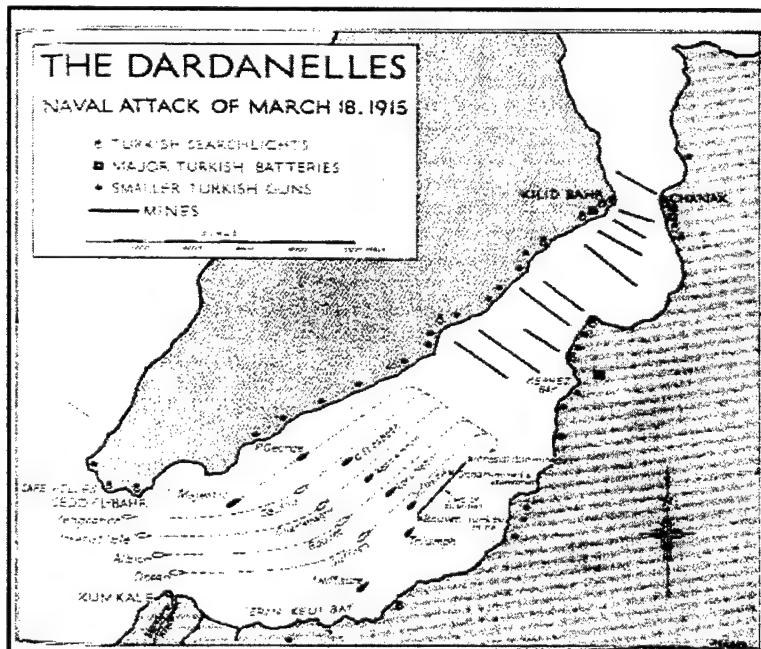


FIGURE 4 - NAVAL ACTION, 18 MARCH

minutes, carrying 639 crewmen with her. At 1411 the *Inflexible* struck a mine, followed by the *Irresistible* and *The Ocean*. At day's end, *Bouvet*, *Irresistible*, and *Ocean* were lost, and three more ships were put out of action indefinitely.<sup>47</sup> Loss of three ships, with Kitchener's rapidly

arriving ground forces, precipitated a new strategy. Instead of a predominantly naval option, the ground forces assumed the primary role, while the Navy supported them. Hamilton's 19 March cable to Kitchener acknowledged this new strategy, which had been forced on the British by the loss of De Robeck's ships: "I have not yet received any report on the naval action, but from what I actually saw of the extraordinarily gallant attempt made yesterday I am being most reluctantly driven towards the conclusion that the Dardanelles are less likely to be forced by battleships than at one time seemed probable, and that if the Army is to participate its operations will not assume the subsidiary form anticipated."<sup>48</sup>

Kitchener had now fully embraced the plan for military operations and directed Hamilton to proceed with all speed. In fact, he considered Hamilton's plan to commence operations on 14 April as too much of a delay. But Kitchener's delayed commitment of the 29th Division now came back to haunt him with a vengeance: The force required to seize the peninsula would not be available until late April. The loss of a month between the failed attempt at the Narrows and the first landing changed the entire battle space. Enver Pasha's decision to form the 5th Army specifically for the defense of the Dardanelles and appointment of General Liman von Sanders as its commander portended bad news for the Allies.

#### LAND THE LANDING FORCE – THE FIRST LANDINGS

Before us lies an adventure unprecedented in modern war. Together with our comrades of the fleet, we are about to force a landing upon an open beach in face of positions which have been vaunted by our enemies as impregnable. The landing will be made good, by the help of God and the Navy; the positions will be stormed, and the War brought one step nearer to a glorious close." — General Ian Hamilton addressing his forces four days prior to the first landings, 21 April 1915

#### TURKISH DEFENSES.

General von Sanders used his time wisely with a maximum effort to develop defenses. In his memoirs, he noted that the "British gave us four weeks time to prepare for their attack. They had taken some of their troops in the interim to Egypt and Cyprus. This delay just allowed sufficient time to take the most necessary measures and to bring the 3rd Division from Constantinople."

Von Sanders had six divisions assigned to the 5th Army. He did not want to disperse his forces to cover all possible landing sites so that he had no reserves to "check a strong and energetic advance" once the allies overcame resistance on the beach.<sup>49</sup> He also had to consider the Asiatic and Gallipoli coasts in his defense. He identified the Asiatic coasts, Bulair, Suvla Bay, and Cape Helles on Gallipoli as the most likely and threatening landing sites. To

counter these threats, he employed an elastic defense with small forces positioned against likely trouble spots and reserves at strategic points.<sup>50</sup> (Figure 5) He arrayed his forces as follows:

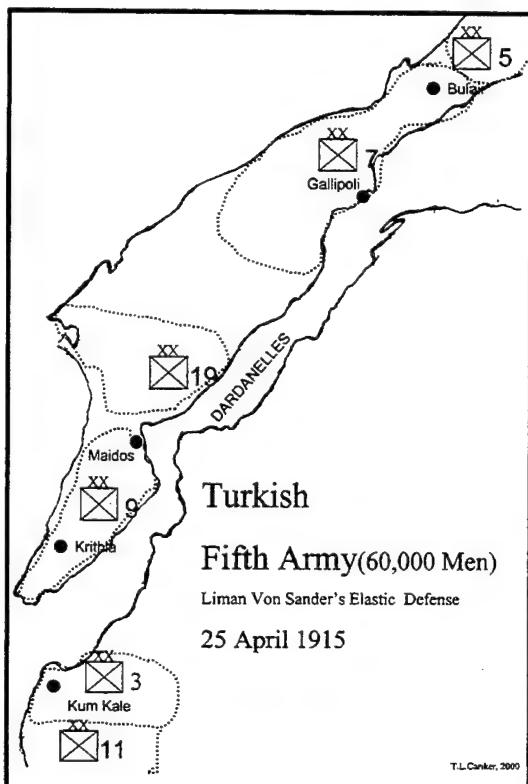


FIGURE 5 - TURKISH DEFENSES

- Asiatic coast - the 11<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Divisions
- Bulair - the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Division
- Cape Helles - 9<sup>th</sup> Division.
- 19<sup>th</sup> Division was positioned near Maidos under the command of Mustapha Kemal to act as a strategic reserve and respond to the area under greatest threat.

As von Sanders continued to strengthen the defenses of the Dardanelles, Ian Hamilton began organizing his forces and preparing for the largest amphibious operation in history to that date.<sup>51</sup> He faced the challenges of dissenting generals, lack of operational security, and poorly planned logistics. He re-directed all ships from Lemnos to Alexandria to reload their cargo for the amphibious landing, overcame his divisional commander's pessimism, and began preparing his plan. He had assembled 100,000 troops for the Mediterranean Expeditionary

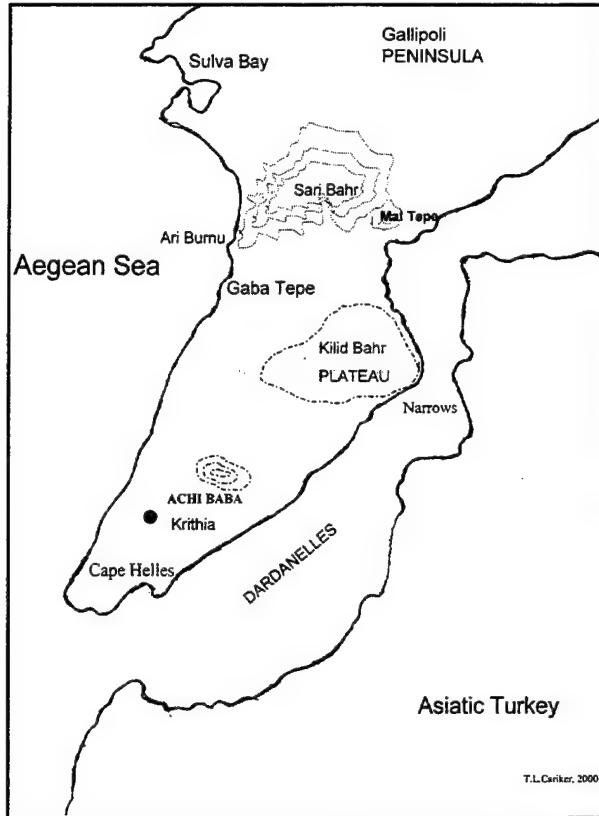
Force (M.E.F.) consisting of:

- The 29th Division commanded by Major-General Hunter-Weston
- Royal Naval Division commanded by Major-General Paris
- The Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC), Commanded by Lieutenant-General Birdwood
  - Australian Division – Major-General Bridges
  - New Zealand and Australian Division – Major-General Godley
- French Expeditionary Force, Commanded by General d'Amade

Unit	Type	Corps	Troops (rifles)	Guns	Location
29 <sup>th</sup> Division	British	None	18,200	56	Helles
French Division	French	French	18,000	32	Helles
Australian	Australian	ANZAC	30,000 (total)	54 (total)	Gaba Tepe
Aust – N.Z.	Aust/N.Z.	ANZAC		"	Gaba Tepe
Total			85,200	150	

TABLE 1 - FORCES OF THE M.E.F., 25 APRIL<sup>52</sup>

In preparing his plan, Hamilton considered several factors: forces available; the decidedly difficult terrain; Kitchener's prohibition on landing on Asiatic Turkey; and an uncertain estimate of defending Turkish forces. He also had to answer two basic questions: where to land and what should be the objectives of the troops once landed?<sup>53</sup> Using all the available information, and after making personal reconnaissance of the coasts, General Hamilton reluctantly decided to ignore Napoleon's maxim about dividing forces and selected two main landing sites: Cape Helles on the southern tip and Gaba Tepe on the west coast. He selected these sites to gain quick access to the dominating terrain on the Gallipoli peninsula: 1) the Sari Bahr mountain, 970 feet; 2) Kilid Bahr plateau, 700 feet; 3) Achi Baba, 600 feet, dominating the south end of the peninsula.<sup>54</sup> (Figure 6)



#### CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS.

The plan called for ANZAC forces to land at beach Z, north of Gaba Tepe, on the Aegean coast. The objective of the landing force was to attack and occupy the Sari Bahr Mountain with a covering force, while the main force attacked inland to seize the heights of Mal Tepe. Control of this high ground would prohibit Turkish reinforcements from attacking the main force at Cape Helles. The Gaba Tepe landing was a subsidiary or supporting landing for the main landing at Helles.

The landing site at Cape Helles was broken into several subordinate landing beaches designated Y, X, W, V, and S. The 29th Division would conduct the main landing, with the French and Naval Division arriving after deception operations were carried out. The tactical objective was the heights of Achi Baba, from which forces could dominate the Narrows with artillery.

Hamilton divided the Cape Helles landing area into five subordinate sites because of its broken terrain and the size of available beaches to accommodate the large landing force. Cape

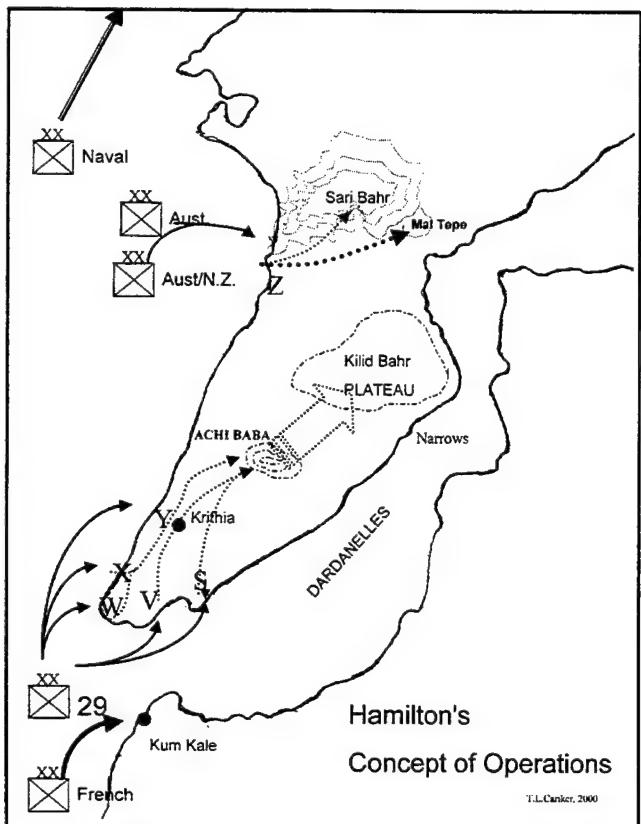


FIGURE 7 - CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS,  
APRIL 1915

Helles consisted of three main landing beaches—V, W, and X—and two supporting landing beaches designated S and Y. (Figure 7)

V beach - On the Dardanelles side of the tip of Cape Helles in the shadow of Fort Sedd-el-Bahr, considered the main landing site.  
W beach - South of Cape Tekke on the tip of Cape Helles.

X beach - North of Cape Tekke on the Aegean coast.

S beach - Morto Bay on the Dardanelles side.

Y beach - Due west of the town of Krithia.<sup>55</sup>

Hamilton's plan called for the French Division to conduct an amphibious raid at Kum Kale on the Asiatic coast to tie down the defending Turkish Divisions and prohibit Turkish batteries from shelling the Cape Helles landing sites. Concurrently, the Royal Naval Division, minus the Plymouth Battalion assigned to support Y beach

landings, would conduct a feint in the Gulf of Xeros to tie down the Turkish divisions to the north.

General Hamilton considered alternative landings in the Gulf of Xeros near the Bulair line and on the Asiatic Coast. But he rejected the Bulair option because his force would be susceptible to attack from two directions, and Asiatic Turkey because of Kitchener's prohibition.

On 25 April 1915, Hamilton prepared to conduct an amphibious operation, which would not be surpassed in size or scope until 29 years later on the beaches of Normandy. This ambitious operation posed some significant problems:

- The newly assembled force had little time to train together or rehearse.
- Hamilton's administrative staff had not yet arrived.
- Kitchener refused to allocate him the requested 10% manning for casualty replacement.

- d. No specialized landing craft were available. Landing forces relied on war ships to position troops then transfer them into small boats (cutters) roped together in a "tow" and pulled by a steam pinnace. As they closed in on the shore, the boats were released from the tow to row ashore.
- e. Divisions were short of artillery and ammunition.
- f. Estimates of Turkish forces were vague and uncertain. Hamilton's staff estimated Turkish forces at 40,000 on the peninsula with a reserve of 30,000.<sup>56</sup>
- g. Hamilton selected the Battleship Queen Elizabeth as his command and control ship. Assigned a mission of gunfire support, she could not move about the battle space for command and control as needed.<sup>57</sup>

With his forces assembled and the Turkish defenses strengthening by the day, and following several weather delays, Hamilton launched the landing operation.

#### ANZAC COVE

The first landing took place about one mile north of its intended location, Z beach, at what would become known as ANZAC cove. The 3rd Australian Brigade, commanded by Colonel MacLagan went ashore at 0400 to act as the covering force. The main landing was frustrated when "tows" became crossed as they approached the beach resulting in battalions becoming hopelessly mixed. This was complicated as they attempted to negotiate the hilly terrain and hidden valleys and gulches. The covering force attacked brilliantly and gained ground that once lost would never be gained again during the campaign. ANZAC forces fought a determined fight against an underestimated Turkish defender. Any ANZAC success for the day is attributable to the extraordinary effort of the ANZAC soldiers fighting in small groups dispersed throughout the chaotic battlefield.

The Turks were as surprised by the errant ANZAC landing as were the ANZACs themselves. Liman Von Sanders had anticipated a landing at the designated landing beach and deployed his forces accordingly. However, when the current pushed the ANZAC force a mile north, they too were unprepared. Turkish forces began to retreat under ANZAC pressure. For a while it appeared the allied landing was successful. However, the leadership and decisive action of Mustafa Kemal, acting without orders and committing Von Sanders' operational reserve, enabled the Turkish defenders to contain the ANZAC advance.<sup>58</sup> Had Hamilton used the ANZAC landing as his main effort and reinforced its initial success, he may well have broken Turkish defenses on the peninsula.<sup>59</sup>

Throughout the day, elements of the Australian and New Zealand-Australian division landed, bringing force strength to about 12,000 men. Fierce fighting continued and Turkish forces increased to 20,000 to include heavy guns, which harassed the beachhead and landing ships. By 2000, the tactical situation was desperate enough for a recently landed General Birdwood to signal Hamilton: "if troops are subjected to shell fire again tomorrow morning there is likely to be a fiasco as I have no fresh troops with which to replace those on the firing line. I know my representation is most serious but if we are to re-embark it must be at once."<sup>60</sup> Birdwood's divisional commanders, Major General Bridges and Major General Godley, influenced this desperate signal to Hamilton without any input from their engaged brigade commanders, who opposed evacuation.<sup>61</sup> Hamilton uncharacteristically intervened after consulting his Admirals about possible evacuation and signaled Birdwood to "Make a personal appeal to your men and Godley's to make a supreme effort to hold their ground."<sup>62</sup> By the end of the 25<sup>th</sup>, instead of the planned mile-long beachhead, the ANZACS held a beachhead only 1000 yards wide. Throughout the night, they repeatedly fended off Turkish counterattacks and began to dig the trenches that would come to define the Gallipoli campaign.

#### CAPE HELLES.

The five landings at Cape Helles occurred nearly simultaneously.

Acting on his own, Hamilton initiated the landing at Y beach, seeking to relieve pressure on the main landings by drawing Turkish forces from Cape Helles.<sup>63</sup> Forces totaling 2200 men landed in two waves beginning at 0400, first to attack gun emplacements, then to link up with X Beach forces. The King's Own Scottish Borderers (K.O.S.B.), commanded by Colonel A.C. Koe, and the Plymouth Battalion of the Royal Naval Division, under Colonel G.C. Mathews, landed and easily scaled the cliffs with no enemy resistance. The 2,000 men of these two battalions equaled the total Turkish defenders at Cape Helles. Despite hearing the gunfire from the southern landings, only an hour's march away, they did not press the attack. Instead, two colonels, neither of who knew who was in command, did nothing. Admiral Keyes, who quickly recognized the significance of the situation, pleaded with Hamilton to reinforce this success with the Naval Division feinting in the Gulf of Saros. Hamilton declined to intervene without General Hunter-Weston's concurrence. When Weston-Hunter finally replied, he declined to reinforce Y Beach based on advice that committing the Naval Division would disrupt the disembarkation plan.<sup>64</sup> Hamilton once again failed to boldly exercise his authority and responsibility as the Commander-in-Chief. Instead, he acquiesced to his divisional and corps commanders at these separate landing sites. In doing so, he failed to leverage his forces to exploit early successes.

X Beach lay just south of Y Beach and was attacked concurrently with Y beach landing. The plan called for landing 3,000 troops in three waves beginning at 0600.<sup>65</sup> The initial landing was entrusted to the 2nd Royal Fusiliers, who landed a half a battalion at a time with few casualties. The real hero of the landing was *HMS Implacable*, which delivered devastating shellfire from 450 yards offshore. Moving in under the naval fire, the 1st Borderers and 1st Inniskilling Fusiliers landed and pushed inland. Throughout the day and into the night, forces gained and lost ground. They eventually dug in and linked up with the perimeter of W beach.

W Beach was defended by elements of the 26th Turkish infantry regiment, 9th Division; underwater entanglements and mines also protected it. The plan called to land 3900 men there beginning at 0600.<sup>66</sup> The battleships *HMS Swiftshire* and *Euryalus* provided covering fire for the Lancashire Fusiliers of the 87th Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General S.W. Hare. Turkish forces held fire until landing boats had grounded. Then they attacked with vigor killing many of the landing force before they left the boats. The force divided into three pockets. A battalion of Worcesters, who landed at the more secure beach location and succeeded in pushing inland and forming a perimeter, reinforced it. Later that evening, reinforcements intended for the ill-fated V beach landed and succeeded in tying into the W beach perimeter.

V Beach was designated the main landing site because of its accessible terrain which could be protected by naval gunfire. Hamilton agreed to a navy plan to use the converted collier River Clyde as a kind of Trojan horse to land men quickly.<sup>67</sup> The ship was packed with 2500 men of the Dublin Fusiliers, Munster Fusiliers, and the Hampshire Regiment. Eight doors or sally ports had been cut into its side to allow rapid debarkation. After transferring from trawlers to tows, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers were to land and serve as a covering force for the Clyde landing. However Clasutwitz's friction, which is always amplified in amphibious operations, complicated the plan. The River Clyde landed early and further off shore than anticipated which hindered ship-to-shore movement. Turkish fire slaughtered the men landing from the tows and storming out of the River Clyde. Of the 1000 men who landed from *Clyde*, almost half had been killed or wounded by 1030. During this horrendous landing, a small contingent landed in a small cove to the right of the *Clyde*, protected from direct fire. Had commanders exploited this cove the continuing slaughter of men landing from *River Clyde* directly into Turkish fire could have been avoided. Following nightfall, the remaining 1000 troops disembarked from the ship virtually unmolested.

The landing at S Beach, also known as Morto Bay or Eski Hissarlik Point, was intended to protect the right flank of the main landing on V beach. The beach was considered undesirable as a main landing site because of its exposure to fire from Asiatic Turkey. The landing was

assigned to the 2nd South Wales Borderers, commanded by Colonel Casson. It landed early on the 25th. One hundred Marines from the HMS *Cornwallis* assisted in neutralizing De Tott's Battery, which threatened V beach, and then secured the high ground.

Liman Von Sanders identified Bulair as the second most important landing site, behind Asiatic Turkey, and assigned two divisions to its defense.<sup>68</sup> General Hamilton was concerned about these forces and planned a deception using the Naval Infantry Division conducting an amphibious demonstration to keep them fixed in place during the initial landings. The Naval Division would then land at Cape Helles to reinforce the 29<sup>th</sup> Division. The Battleship *Canopus* bombarded the Karachali and the Bulair defenses in an attempt to keep the enemy guessing about the intended landing site. The amphibious demonstration successfully occupied the 5th and 7th divisions during the crucial landing phase.

The French Division was tasked to conduct an amphibious raid against Turkish forces on Asiatic Turkey around Kum Kale with the purpose of tying up the two Turkish divisions defending the Asiatic coast and silencing the guns threatening S and V Beach landings. The French executed the landing and captured Kum Kale, successfully drawing fire away from the main landings on Gallipoli. As planned, they withdrew on the 26th and reinforced the Helles lodgment.

At the end of the first day, the situation was grim for both sides. Hamilton's plan to land in the south and quickly occupy Achi Baba and secure the heights of the Sari Bahr hills was not realized. Instead, the Allies found themselves desperately beating off Turkish counterattacks and trying to consolidate their meager gains. The Turks likewise suffered tremendous casualties and were fighting desperately to maintain their lines.

For the next three days, the allies tried relentlessly to gain Achi Baba in the south and dominate the high ground in the ANZAC sector. But the Turkish forces remained intent on pushing them back into the sea.<sup>69</sup> Both sides suffered from three days of nonstop attack and counterattack. By the 29<sup>th</sup> it became obvious that neither side was going to collapse as fighting became more sporadic, with futile episodic attempts to gain ground or penetrate through the lines. Conditions were deteriorating into another "Western Front" warfare of trenches and attrition. Hamilton's goals at Helles were to straighten and consolidate the line and then try to take the town of Krithia, which would open the road to his main objective – Achi Baba. From this hill, Hamilton argued he could dominate the Narrows. This, in turn, would precipitate the collapse of Turkish resistance across the toe of the peninsula.<sup>70</sup>

By the end of April, the allied forces were fully committed. But Kitchener's refusal to allocate the customary 10% troop strength to account for casualties hobbled any attempt to

exploit Turkish disorganization and loss. Every day, Von Sanders poured more reinforcements into the line. On the 26<sup>th</sup>, he dispatched the elements of the 11th and 7th divisions to Helles, followed by the 3rd Division from Asiatic Turkey and two additional divisions from Constantinople. He also reinforced Mustafa Kemal with two regiments of the 11<sup>th</sup> Division to keep pressure on the ANZACS.<sup>71</sup> By 30 April, Turkish forces consisted of seventy-five battalions against the Hamilton's fifty-seven.<sup>72</sup> By 5 May, Enver Pasha admitted that the attacks and counterattacks he had ordered resulted in over 45,000 casualties.<sup>73</sup>

#### EVENTS OF MAY - JUNE - JULY

Hamilton needed reinforcements and additional troops if he were to overcome the rapidly increasing Turkish defenders. However, because of Kitchener's often-articulated position on the campaign, he was reluctant to ask for any additional forces. Fortunately, Admirals Guepratte and de Robeck sent messages accurately describing the tactical situation and calling for reinforcements. In his typically secretive way, Kitchener signaled General Maxwell in Egypt to send the idle 42nd division and 29th Indian Infantry Brigade to Gallipoli and to inform Hamilton of this action. The French, in response to Guepratte's message, also contributed a division. On 4 May, Hamilton cabled Kitchener that ammunition, especially artillery ammunition, was critically low. Kitchener replied that "the supply was not calculated in the basis of a long prolonged occupation of the peninsula" concluding that "it is important to push on."<sup>74</sup>

The arrival of the 29th Indian Infantry Brigade on 1 May was fortuitous: they arrived just as the Turks were commencing several days of attacks against the Cape Helles positions. Hamilton began his second attempt at taking Krithia on 6 May, as soon as the advanced elements of the 42nd division arrived and integrated into the firing line. He transferred the 2nd Australian Brigade and the New Zealand Infantry Brigade from the ANZAC Corps to Helles to support his main attack. The attack lasted two days and gained little over 600 yards. On 9 May, Kitchener, in an estimate of forces, reported that the "Turks had about 40,000 opposed to our 25,000 rifles (men actually on the firing line at Helles) and 20,000 more in front of the Australian -New Zealand Army Corps' 12,000 rifles at Gaba Tepe."<sup>75</sup>

By the middle of May, the forces at Cape Helles were reorganized into two Corps: the VIII Corps, formed out of the 29th, 42nd and the Royal Naval Divisions; and the French Corps of two divisions. By the end of May, the forces on the Gallipoli peninsula were the ANZAC Corps, dug in within a small lodgment at Gaba Tepe, and the French and VIII Corps, which by June had straightened its lines across the toe of the peninsula. The Helles front was divided into four sectors: The 29th Division and Indian Infantry Brigade were on the left; the 42nd East

Lancashire Division was on the left center; the Royal Naval Division, the right center; and the French Corps was on the right.<sup>76</sup> The 52nd Territorial Division (Lowland Division), which was sent in response to Hamilton's estimate of the situation on 9 May, arrived early June and incorporated into VIII Corps. The following forces arrived during May and June:

Unit	Type	Corps	Troops (rifles)	Guns	Location
29 <sup>th</sup> Indian Inf. Bde	Commonwealth	VIII	2500		Helles
2 <sup>nd</sup> French Division	French	French	8,500	30	Helles
42 <sup>nd</sup> Division	Territorial	VIII	13,000		Helles
52 <sup>nd</sup> Div.	Territorial	VIII	10,600	20	Helles
ANZAC replacements	Aust/N.Z.	ANZAC	4,500		Gaba Tepe

TABLE 2 - REINFORCEMENTS DURING MAY-JUNE<sup>77</sup>

As Hamilton tried to reorganize his forces and defend against Turkish attacks and counterattacks, the political situation in London was escalating towards a crisis. Once again, the first Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill, and his First Sea Lord Fisher were at odds over the campaign. Churchill was eager to try to force the straits again with ships, but Fisher wanted no part of it. To complicate the strategic situation, Italy wanted several British capital ships under their control in the Mediterranean as a condition for joining the Allies. Thinking de Robeck had abandoned the idea of forcing the straits and not understanding the ships' critical fire support role for Hamilton's army, Churchill agreed to provide them to the Italians from the Dardanelles force. The sinking of *HMS Goliath* in the mouth of the Dardanelles by a Turkish destroyer further complicated the issue of naval support. This event, plus the sinking of *HMS Triumph*, off ANZAC cove, *HMS Majestic*, added to the growing concern over the U-boat menace and caused Churchill to recall the *Queen Elizabeth* from service. Lord Kitchener considered this an abandonment of the forces that had landed to take up the struggle after the Navy's failure. In addition, the Cabinet in London was debating whether to continue the Dardanelles operation.

On 14 May, the Council debated implications of withdrawal on Balkan stability, on the Russian alliance, and to British prestige. The single outcome was to ask Hamilton what forces he would require to ensure success of the campaign. Hamilton replied that if the present strategic situation prevailed and Turkey could focus exclusively on Gallipoli, then he would require two additional Army Corps and a liberal supply of artillery ammunition to win the campaign.<sup>78</sup>

The ongoing debacle at the Dardanelles, combined with the munitions shortage at home, fed the flames of political unrest, leading to a change of administration in London. This turbulence immediately affected the campaign. First came the resignation of Admiral Fisher, quickly followed by Arthur Balfour replacing Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty on 26 May. The change in government also postponed a decision on continuing the campaign by three weeks, and the War Council was re-named the Dardanelles Committee. On 7 June, the Dardanelles Committee agreed to "reinforce Sir Ian Hamilton with three remaining divisions of the New Army, with a view to assault in the second week of July" and "send out certain naval units, which would be much less vulnerable to submarine attack than those under Admiral de Robecks's command."<sup>79</sup> These less vulnerable ships were the new "monitor ships" fitted with anti-torpedo blisters had been developed under Admiral Fisher. By the end of June, Kitchener and the Dardanelles Committee decided to send two additional divisions to Hamilton, the 53<sup>rd</sup> (Welsh) and 54<sup>th</sup> (East Anglican), which would eventually bring Hamilton's force to a total of thirteen divisions, totaling over 120,000 men. At that time, England fielded a total of 24 divisions in France. These decisions changed the nature of the Gallipoli expedition from an economy-of-force campaign to a major front, one that seriously competed with the Western Front for manpower and munitions.<sup>80</sup>

Throughout the remainder of June and July, Hamilton contended with the oppressive heat, risk of disease because of unburied bodies, and the increasing Turkish offensives. Several ill-conceived Allied offensives resulted in little more than attriting Hamilton's forces, especially the destruction of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Division on 12 July. An action that was intended to "maintain an aggressive posture at Helles" turned into a poorly planned assault on prepared defensive positions, grimly yielding 2500 casualties out of a 7500 man division. Major General C.G.A. Egerton, the Division commander, was relieved.<sup>81</sup> As Hamilton awaited his reinforcing Divisions, he and his corps commanders planned the next phase.

#### **LAND THE LANDING FORCE.... AGAIN – THE GRAND ATTACK AND SUVLA BAY LANDINGS**

A week lost was about the same as a division. Three divisions in February could have occupied the Gallipoli peninsula with little fighting. Five could have captured it after 18 March. Seven were insufficient at the end of April, but nine might just have done it. Eleven might have sufficed at the beginning of July. Fourteen were to prove insufficient in August. — Winston Churchill

Two types of reinforcing units were deployed to Gallipoli during July. The first were "Territorial Divisions," units that served as "home guards" for the defense of Great Britain and for

which Kitchener had total disdain. They typically were poorly trained, had little discipline, and no combat experience. The second were from the "New Army," units raised under Kitchener's call for volunteers in 1914, before Britain instituted conscription. Hamilton faced the challenge of committing these untested troops into an active theater against a combat hardened enemy. His plan had to account for this reality. He essentially had four options for using these forces: 1) Position all the additional forces in the south at Cape Helles and push towards the Narrows. 2) Land on Asiatic Turkey and push from there. 3) Seize the neck of the peninsula by landing at Bulair. 4) Land at Suvla Bay in support of an ANZAC breakout. A Helles landing was untenable because of the room required for the additional forces and the formidable defensive works in place around Achi Baba. The Asiatic option was discarded because the additional forces were too small to conduct a sustained operation across the straits, and there was not enough transport to support three separate operations. The additional fifty miles to Bulair from advanced bases through dangerous waters, and the uncertainty of the impact of seizing the neck would have on operations, mitigated against the "Bulair" option.<sup>82</sup> Only the Suvla landing option remained.

Hamilton's plan called for a three phases. First, the VIII and French Corps would conduct a diversion at Helles to fix southern Turkish forces. Second, the ANZAC forces would conduct two attacks in sector, a division would attack Lone Pine Hill on the right flank, followed by the main attack on the left flank of the ANZAC sector to seize high ground and eventually secure Sari Bair. Finally, IX Corps, formed from newly arriving divisions, would land at Suvla bay to act as a supporting attack to Birdwood's ANZAC breakout.

The plan was not developed by the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force Commander or his staff, rather "the idea was born at ANZAC."<sup>83</sup> It was a modification of General Birdwood's "breakout plan" drawn up in May and approved by Hamilton in June, prior to the promise of reinforcements.<sup>84</sup> This clearly demonstrates that although Hamilton definitely knew he needed reinforcements for success, he had little idea about how to employ them in pursuit of victory. The objective of this overly ambitious plan was geographic; it was not focused on any particular enemy unit. Hamilton continued to assume that by taking the Sari Bair range and controlling the waist of the peninsula, he could defeat the Turks to the south and control the straits. In his own words, ""Our whole scheme hinges on these crests of Sari Bair which dominate ANZAC and Maidos; the Dardanelles and the Aegean."<sup>85</sup> For the first time since the April landing, he had now moved away from his southern "Achi Baba" focus for controlling the Narrows to a "northern" approach.

The Helles portion of the plan called for the VIII Corps, consisting of the 29th, 42nd, 52nd, and R.N.D., with a strength of 26,000 out of a normal 46,000, and the French Corps, consisting of the 1st and 2nd Divisions totaling 15,000, to conduct a two-phase attack over a mile-wide front. The first attack would occur at 1600 on 6 August and the second early morning on the 7<sup>th</sup> - both in broad daylight. The purpose of these attacks was to fix Turkish forces to prevent reinforcements moving north.

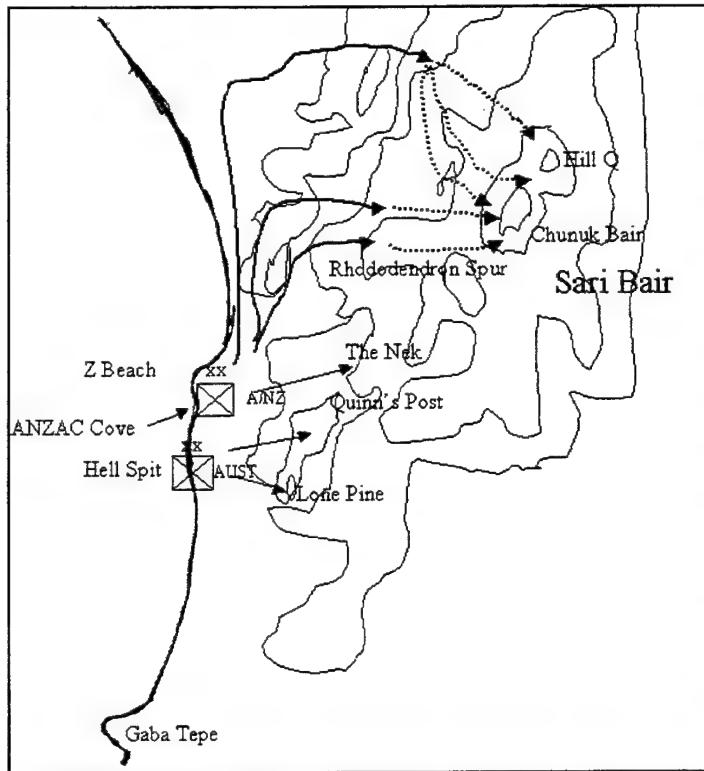


FIGURE 8 - ANZAC CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS  
AUGUST 1915

and right covering forces and assault forces. This plan resulted in fragmenting the forces, which violated the principle of mass, and called for attacks on terrain that greatly favored the Turks.

In the third attack, the newly arrived IX Corps would land at Suvla Bay with a twofold, arguably conflicting mission. First, it would secure the left flank of ANZAC and assist with their mission. Second, it would seize and secure a base for continued Dardanelles operations.

The Turkish defenders were not sitting idly by as all this planning took place. Liman Von Sanders received intelligence reports concerning the deployment of fresh Allied forces and faced a similar dilemma to the one in April: Where would the new Allied attack take place? He decided that landings on the Asiatic shores and Helles" were not probable," Bulair was "not

The ANZAC attacks were more complicated (figure 8). The ANZAC forces consisted of the 1st Australian Division, the Australian and New Zealand Division, the 29th Indian Infantry Brigade and the newly arrived 13th Division. The 1st Australian Division would conduct the divisional attack on Lone Pine Hill at 1630 to draw Turkish reserves off the high ground away from the main attack. The Australian and New Zealand Division had the most difficult task of taking several key high points in the Sari Bair ridge over the most rugged terrain on the Gallipoli peninsula.

Because of the broken terrain, the Division's assault plan called for a left

impossible," and there was a "slight indication" that it may occur at ANZAC. He noted that the "greatest preoccupation of the 5th Army concerned the open space between Ariburnu (ANZAC) and the south (Helles)." He decided that to succeed, the allies would have to "attack the defending Turkish forces in the south from the rear."<sup>86</sup> Based on this estimate, he arrayed his forces into four defensive groups. The Southern Group — consisting of the 1st, 10th, 13th, and 14th divisions, with the 4th, 8th divisions in reserve — would contain and defeat the Helles lodgment. The Northern group — commanded by Essad Pasha and consisting of the 9th, 5th, 16th and 19th divisions — would contain the ANZAC sector. The Saros (Xeros) group — consisting of the 7th, 12th, and 6th divisions — would protect the Bulair neck of the peninsula. The fourth group — made up of the 2nd, 3rd, and 11th divisions — made up the Asiatic group. As early August arrived, the Turkish forces were prepared for something — but for what, they did not know.

By 6 August, forces totaling nearly 100,000 to be used in the "grand attack" were in place, either on the peninsula or in theater, ready to be shuttled over for the landing.(Table 3)

Unit	Type	Corps	Troops	Guns	Location
29 <sup>th</sup> Division	British	VIII	10,200	57	Helles
1st Division	French	French	7,500	32	Helles
2 <sup>nd</sup> Division	French	French	10,500	30	Helles
Australian	Australian	ANZAC	10,400		Anzac Cove
Aust/N.Z.	Australian/N.Z.	ANZAC	9,500	71	Anzac Cove
Royal Naval Div	Royal Navy	VIII	5,100		Helles
42 <sup>nd</sup> (Lancashire)	Territorial	VIII	7,000	42	Helles
52 <sup>nd</sup> (LowLand)	Territorial	VIII	5,500	21	Helles
10 <sup>th</sup>	British N.A.	IX	7,000	34	Suvla
11 <sup>th</sup>	N.A.	IX	10,000	18	Suvla
13 <sup>th</sup>	N.A.	IX	10,700	52	Suvla
Total 8-6-1915			96,400	357	

TABLE 3 - FORCES OF M.E.F. AUGUST 6, 1915 <sup>87</sup>

The choice of allied commanding officers seriously affected the outcome of the entire campaign. Some, like General Birdwood, were excellent commanders and respected by their men. Most, however, including Hamilton, were ill-suited for a theater that required stamina and decisive action. The traditional process of seniority-based assignments proved disastrous in the selection of a commander for IX Corps. Hamilton requested a seasoned combat veteran to command the Corps — either General Sir Julian Byng or Sir H. Rawlinson. Incredibly, Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Stopford, 61 years old, five years into retirement, and with no combat command experience, was assigned because of his seniority.<sup>88</sup> Stopford was reputed

for his intellectual renown and ceremonial excellence, not operational prowess. Stopford arrived in theater on 17 July and assumed temporary command of the VIII corps after Hunter-Weston's medical relief to give him some experience before landing IX Corps at Suvla Bay. As he familiarized himself at Helles, the forces that comprised his corps prepared for the "Grand Attack."

Hamilton picked the night of 6-7 August to begin operations. He planned an elaborate deception that consisted of both strategic and tactical diversions. The strategic diversions were designed to draw away enemy reserves not yet committed to the peninsula. He accomplished this by conducting a small amphibious raid in the upper Gulf of Xeros and highly visible personal inspections of selected sites, while concentrating French ships off at Mitylene on the Syrian coast and openly producing maps of Asiatic Turkey to deceive the Turks about his intended location. His tactical deception was designed to hold up local reserves; it included the Cape Helles containing attack by VIII and French Corps, the registration of ships guns on the shore below Gaba Tepe, and the attack by the Australian Division on Lone Pine.<sup>89</sup> For command and control, Hamilton established his headquarters on the Island of Imbros because of its central location, "45 minutes from Helles, 40 minutes from ANZAC, and 50 minutes from Suvla." Further, it was at the center of the underwater cable system.<sup>90</sup> The "grand attack" began in the south at Helles on 6 August.

#### HELLES SECTOR

Following an artillery preparation, the containing attack at Helles began at 1550. General Street, Chief-of-Staff and de facto commander of VIII Corps, transformed what was planned as a diversion into another attempt to take Krithia and Achi Baba.<sup>91</sup> The 88th Brigade, 29<sup>th</sup> Division was immediately destroyed in the attack, with two-thirds becoming casualties in the first ten minutes. Seeing the identifying tin plates on the casualties' backs shining in the sun around the Turkish trenches, commanders mistakenly assumed they had been successful and launched the next wave. Only when the 1st Munsters were butchered did they realize the tin plates they had seen were worn by dead soldiers.<sup>92</sup> It was not until midnight that Major General Beauvoir De Lisle, Commander 29th Division, called off the attack. The next day, the 42nd Division commenced its attack only to be thrown back into their trenches. The Helles attack resulted in no gain while inflicting 3,500 casualties on VIII Corps. Hamilton, now concerned about holding Helles, ordered all attacks ceased. Hamilton attributed the success of the Turks against VIII Corps to three reasons: 1) Morale — Turks had heard about Russian military reverses and were motivated. 2). Material — Two divisions of reserves had been committed to

the southern defenses. 3). Fate — The enemy trenches selected for attack were packed with Turkish soldiers. VIII Corps had unknowingly preempted a Turkish attack by about an hour and in doing so encountered many more troops than expected.<sup>93</sup> The success of the Helles diversion was only temporary: The Turks repositioned seven brigades to reinforce the Northern group on 8 August.

#### ANZAC SECTOR

The first phase of the ANZAC plan began at 1730, 6 August, with an attack by the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th battalions of the Australian Division against the Turkish trench line at Lone Pine Hill. Their heroic dash to the trenches was almost in vain when they discovered the trenches had been covered over with pine logs. After removing these barriers and jumping into the trenches with the Turks, the Australians wrested the position from the enemy. They maintained control of this position over the next six days of Turkish counterattacks. Seventeen hundred Australians fell in this action, and seven Victoria Crosses were awarded. The action had its desired effect: Essad Pash, Commander of Turkish troops in sector, moved reinforcements to this area. Unfortunately, these troops arrived in the New Zealand sector in time to counter their operations.

The main assault by the New Zealand Division, under the command of Major-General Godley, began as its two covering force columns moved towards their objectives. The plan relied heavily on an overly optimistic timetable, given the terrain and the fact that it would be executed in the dark. The right column, which had the easier task, assigned its advance guard to seize several key points, Old Post Number 3 and "Table Top," to secure the ravines for the main body. The main body would then move through the ravines and assault Chunuk Bair. The left column's advance guard would proceed along the beach towards the north to link up with IX Corps landing at Suvla to protect the ANZAC left flank. The left main body would then move up the Aghyl Dere Ravine to the attack high ground and seize Hill 971.

The right column began moving at 2100 and realized initial success in capturing Old Post Number 3 and in seizing Bauchops Hill by 0100 on the 7th. These actions cleared the way for the main body to proceed up the ravines towards Chunuk Bair. The left advance column met its timeline and seized Damik-jelik Bair by 0130. The left main body followed closely behind and proceeded up the Aghyl Dere. Darkness, unfamiliar country, and unreliable guides began to take their toll on the main bodies as they soon fell behind their timetables. Neither main body was able to secure its nighttime objective. As dawn arrived on the 7 August, they were still far removed from their objectives. This delay allowed the Turks to move their 9th division into the

area and reduced Allied chances of success. Early on the 7<sup>th</sup>, neither of the assaulting columns attacks met with success. Attacks and counterattacks raged throughout the 7<sup>th</sup>, with the two columns trying to work their way towards their objectives — Hill 971 on the left and Chunuk Bair Ridge on the right.

On the evening of the 7th, Brigadier General Johnston, commander of the right column, halted and planned an attack on the Chunuk Bair Ridge for early the next morning. As he squandered the evening, the 9th Turkish Division was rapidly marching toward the Ridge. Johnson's early morning attack on 8 August met no resistance. He took his objective while the left column still struggled towards its objective. On the 9th, the force was reorganized into three columns with Johnson's right column, now Column 1, ordered to "hold and consolidate the ground gained on the 6th and in cooperation with the other columns, to gain the whole of Chunuk Bair, and extend to the south east."<sup>94</sup> Column 2 and Column 3 were to attack Hill Q on the Chunuk Bair Ridge from their present locations. Again confusion, darkness, and bad luck, to include possible friendly fire from naval ships, conspired against the Allies. Early on the 8<sup>th</sup>, the Wellington Battalion had secured Chunuk Bair, and on the 9th the 1/6th Gurkha rifles managed to make the summit of Hill Q and view the Narrows and Turkish movement to Achi Baba, only to be shelled by their own ships and eventually driven from the hill on 10 August. No matter how successful the ANZAC attack was, only a successfully executed and aggressively driven Suvla landing by IX Corps would win the campaign.

#### SUVLA SECTOR

The seeds for a Suvla disaster were sown when Hamilton assigned conflicting objectives to IX Corps in two separate dispatches. The first, on 22 July, assigned specific objectives of particular high ground and emphasized the importance of neutralizing Turkish guns to prevent their use against the landing force. Hamilton's guidance was: "It is hoped that the remainder of your force (two brigades), will be available to advance on Buyuk Anafarta on the morning of August 7 with the objective of moving up the eastern spurs of hill 305, so as to assist General Birdwood's attack."<sup>95</sup> The second objective is extremely vague and seems to make IX Corps primary mission of supporting the main attack (ANZACS) only an option. A 29 July message confuses the situation when Hamilton redirects:

Your primary objective will be to secure Suvla Bay as a base for all the forces operating in the northern zone... Owing to the difficult nature of the terrain, it is possible that the obtainment of your objective,... will require the whole of the troops at your disposal. Should, however, you should find it possible to achieve this objective with only a portion of your force, your next step will be to give such

direct assistance as in your power to the general officer in commanding ANZAC in his attack on hill 305.<sup>96</sup>

Hamilton's unintended shift of the Suvla landing from a supporting attack to one charged with securing a base significantly changes the role of the landing operation. He would soon regret his ambiguous guidance to the IX Corps. Further, if General Stopford needed a self-fulfilling prophecy he just received one. As the plan was briefed from one command to another, the initial "spirit" of the plan was watered down and the emphasis on speed virtually disappeared. By the time the plan had reached the brigade level, it was generally believed that the ANZAC operation was a supporting attack to facilitate the Suvla landing, not the other way around.<sup>97</sup> Secrecy also contributed to the confusion about a landing objective. As a result of the lack of operational security before the first landing, Hamilton became obsessed with maintaining secrecy for the second. When he heard that Birdwood was sharing the plan with his two divisional commanders, he wrote, "I am sorry you have told your divisional generals. I have not even informed Stopford (IX Corps) or Bailloud (French Corps). Please find out at once how many staff officers each of them has told and let me know. Now take early opportunity of telling your divisional generals that the whole plan is abandoned.... The operation is secret and must remain secret."<sup>98</sup>

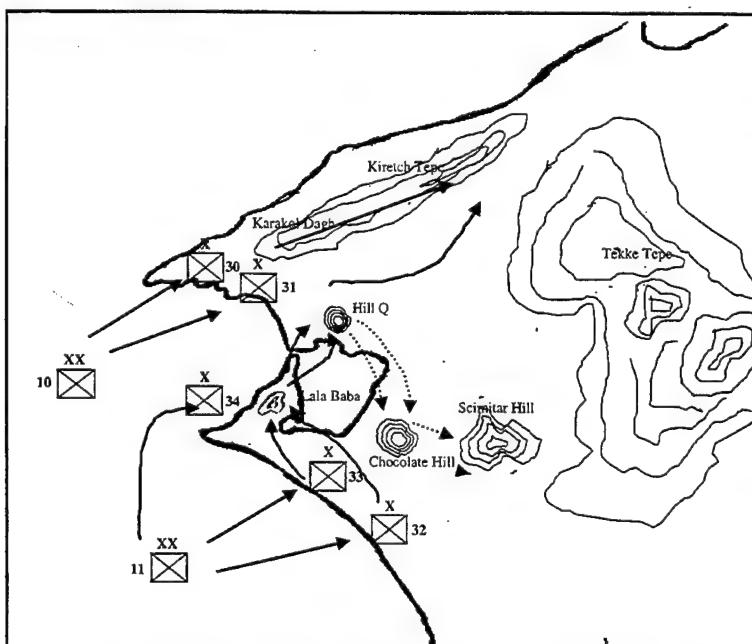


FIGURE 9 - SUVLA CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

The IX Corps, at the time of the landing, consisted of the 10th (Irish) Division, Commanded by Lieutenant-General Sir Bryan Mahon, and the 11th (Northern) Division, commanded by Major-General F. Hammersley. The 13th division had been chopped to ANZAC for the main attack, and the 53rd (Welsh) Division and 54th (East Anglican)

Division were due to arrive in a few days. Both the 53rd and 54th Divisions were

territorial divisions, arriving without any artillery. The only common denominator among IX Corps is that the divisions were relatively new, with no amphibious training or combat experience. Yet with these troops, General Stopford was expected to land a division at night, closely followed by a second, and then make rapid advancement against a seasoned enemy at the hottest time of the year.

The plan itself was relatively simple, especially compared with the ANZAC plan (figure 9). The 11th division would land at 2200 on 6 August with one brigade at "A" beach, north of the cut inside the bay, and two brigades at "B" beach, south of the bay. The brigade at A beach would advance inland to size Hill 10 and Karakol Dagh. The two brigades landing at B beach would push inland to size Lala Baba and Chocolate Hill. Unfortunately, the plan called for the two brigades assaulting Chocolate Hill to move around the dry lake clockwise, rather than push straight ahead, thereby adding 5 km to their march. The 10th Division would land early the 7th and head for the Kirece Tepe Ridge. Then both would push inland to seize the high ground of the Anafarta Hills and join with ANZAC.

Hamilton had learned a lesson from the first landing on 25 April: He landed the first waves at night, with no pre-bombardment to compromise surprise. Also, new "beetle" boats, armored landing craft carrying 500 men, would be employed to rapidly build up combat power ashore. Everything was readied and forces were moved from staging bases in Lemnos, Imbros, and Mytilene on the night of 6 August to begin landing operations.

The landing of the 11<sup>th</sup> Division's 32nd and 33rd brigades on B beach went ahead on schedule. They landed with little resistance and moved towards their objective (Lala Baba), securing it by midnight after suffering significant casualties inflicted by an under-strength Turkish defending force of about 1500. The A beach landing was another matter. Boats and beetles grounded, and the landing became confused as some units landed below the cut instead of above it. Still more of the brigade was landed on B beach, which slowed down their advance. With the assistance of the 32nd brigade, they managed to take their first objective (Hill 10) where their commander, Brigadier-General Sitwell, decided to stop and dig in.

The landing of the 10<sup>th</sup> Division was utter chaos. The beetles grounded attempting to land at A beach, so the remainder of the division was diverted to C beach on the wrong side of the bay from their objective. Stopford placed the brigades that landed at C beach under command of the 11th Division, which infuriated Mahon, who

threatened to resign on the spot in the middle of a contested landing. Brigade commanders, who had little knowledge of the plan or the location of their objective, found themselves lost or behind schedule. Hamilton was now reaping the whirlwind from having sown the seeds of secrecy.

As the 7th wore on, confusion dominated the Suvla plain. Battalions were stopping and digging in for no apparent reason. Brigade commanders fought amongst themselves about support and objectives. Divisional control was non-existent. To make matters worse, the navy was failing to get re-supplies ashore, especially bulk water. In spite of all this, by 1500 a Corps-wide advance began with the 11th Div pushing towards Chocolate Hill and the 10th marching about 5 miles to seize the Kirete Tepe Ridge. Major Willmer, German commander of the defending forces of Anafarta, observed IX Corps moving forward and "noted all the signs of ill trained troops: bunching, poor field craft, reckless exposure, and apparent lack of coordinated effort."<sup>99</sup> But after serious fighting, Chocolate Hill and W Hill were in British hands by evening on the 7th.

Then over the next 24 hours the Suvla attack, and arguably the entire campaign, was lost. On the evening of the 7th, Stopford's IX Corps faced an effective strength of 1100 Turks defending a two-and-a-half mile front. Yet he did nothing. As they rested for the night, three Turkish battalions dispatched by Liman Von Sanders earlier that day were rapidly marching towards the Anafarta ridge to reinforce Willmer's troops, with two more divisions in trace. This 24-hour pause allowed Turkish forces to arrive and occupy significant high ground.

Early on the 8<sup>th</sup>, instead of pressing the attack, Stopford sent congratulations to his troops for their splendid job. When reminded that his Corps had not yet reached the hills — their objective, he replied "No — but they are ashore."<sup>100</sup> Hamilton gently pushed for an advance but was opposed by Stopford, who said his units "were unable to move owing to the exhaustion of their men."<sup>101</sup> This exhaustion was due in large part to a lack of fresh water: The bulk water had arrived, but the distribution system had broken down.

A frustrated Hamilton took the unusual step of going to Suvla, arriving at 1600 on the 8th only to find that lethargy had descended on IX Corps. When he confronted the divisional commanders, they reiterated their reluctance to press on. Instead of relieving them on the spot, he once again took an unprecedented step and went directly to the 32nd Brigade and ordered it to push on "even if it is only a company."<sup>102</sup> Ironically, the 11th Division commander, General Hammersly, acting on this direction, recalled a

battalion of the 32 Brigade that had occupied the high ground known as Scimitar Hill on its own initiative, in preparation for an advance on Tekke Tepe. The abandoned Scimitar Hill was immediately occupied by reinforcing Turkish units. The newly arrived 53rd Division was landed on the night of 8 August and thrown into the assault against that same hill. For the remainder of the day and into the 9<sup>th</sup>, Stopford's Corps tried unsuccessfully to take Scimitar Hill at great cost. Abandonment of Scimitar Hill was just one of many cruel ironies during the campaign—all of them thwarting Allied success.

On the 9th, in its push for Tekke Tepe and Scimitar Hill, IX Corps was counter-attacked by the newly arrived Turkish 7th and 12th Divisions. Both Hamilton and Von Sanders consider this day a failure: Hamilton, because he did not take the Suvla hills; Von Sanders, because he did not retake Chocolate Hill.<sup>103</sup> Hamilton, who visited Birdwood at ANZAC later that day, offered the 54th Division to assist him, based on his optimistic prediction of victory within the next few days. Birdwood refused the offer on the grounds he could not provide water for another division.

10 August was Hamilton's "worst of all days"—and the beginning of the end of the Dardanelles Campaign.<sup>104</sup> On this day, Mustafa Kemal, who was placed in command of the Anafarta defensive sector following the relief of Feizi Bey and reinforced with troops from the southern zone, displaced the New Zealanders from Sari Bair. At Suvla, Stopford, who continued to delay the advances of IX Corps, let operational success slip from his hands. Realizing the futility of advancing with the exhausted troops, Hamilton ordered a consolidation of the ground on the 13th of August.

Hamilton attempted another push at Suvla with the arrival of the 54th division, but it also failed. It was during this last effort of the "Grand Attack" that the most mysterious event of the campaign occurred. During a last push on Tekke Tepe, a unit from the 54th Division, the 5th Norfolk, virtually disappeared. Ian Hamilton wrote:

The colonel, with his 16 officers and 250 men, still kept pushing on, driving the enemy before him. Amongst those ardent souls was part of a fine company enlisted from the King's Sandringham estates. Nothing more was ever seen or heard of any of them. They charged into the forest, and were lost to sight or sound. Not one of them ever came back.<sup>105</sup>

Von Sanders later admitted that he had committed his last reserves during this attack. If the British had been successful, they could have outflanked the Turkish defenses and cut the peninsula in two.

The losses suffered by the B.E.F. in the three zones, which totaled over 30,000, compelled Hamilton to assume the defensive. On 16 August, Hamilton, concerned about his depleted forces, requested "45,000 rifles to fill up the gaps in the British divisions, and 50,000 rifles as fresh reinforcements for a quick and victorious decision."<sup>106</sup> Unfortunately, several other events had eroded Cabinet support for the campaign. On 4 August, the fall of Warsaw to the Germans all but eliminated any expectation of Russian assistance in the capture of Constantinople. Also, preparation for the Loos offensive on the Western Front in September increased the influence of the "Westerners" who continued to adamantly oppose throwing men into the eastern campaign. These events, combined with a growing pessimism in England concerning the campaign, prompted the Cabinet to refuse his request. They did, however, send the 2nd Mounted Division from Egypt, with its 5,000-dismounted cavalrymen.

After visiting IX Corps on 13 August, Hamilton belatedly concluded that Stopford should be relieved. However, because of the close personal relationships that developed in the "peacetime" British officer corps, it was difficult for men like Hamilton to "sack" incompetent officers. With assistance from Kitchener, Stopford was relieved and replaced temporarily with General De Lisle from 29th Division. This appointment caused problems with the temperamental and senior Mahon of the 10th Division: He resigned on the spot only to be reinstated later.<sup>107</sup>

On 21 August, Hamilton ordered IX Corps to attack Ismail Oglu Tepe in an attempt to consolidate the Suvla and ANZAC fronts. This would turn out to be the largest battle, in terms of troops involved, of the entire campaign. He transferred the eroded 29th Division from Helles, and added the 2nd Mounted Division to IX Corps, which now contained the 10th, 11th, 53rd and 54th Divisions. The battle lasted several days and resulted in little gain. This was to be the last battle of any significance of the Dardanelles campaign.

Hamilton redistributed some units. Then the arrival of the second Australian Division gave ANZAC troops, who had been on the peninsula since April, an opportunity to come off the line and rest in Mudros. Hamilton then settled down and began ordering supplies for the winter campaign.

## **BRILLIANT DECEPTION – THE EVACUATION**

"I hope *they* won't hear us marching off." — Australian soldier's comment about leaving fallen comrades, addressed to General Birdwood as the solideir boarded one of the final boats leaving ANZAC cove.

General Byng, Hamilton's original choice to command IX Corps, arrived from the Western Front and replaced De Lisle as Corps commander. As September wore on, a groundswell for Hamilton's relief was growing in London. Letters from politically connected officers, even from Churchill's brother Jack, who ran the General Headquarters camp on Imbros, and the reports from Australian journalist Kevin Murdoch and Ellis Ashead-Bartlett of the London Press, depicting the incompetence of senior leaders and the appalling conditions on the peninsula, helped fan the flames of unrest. Even the recently relieved General Stopford was making serious allegations about Hamilton and his staff's "interference" during the Suvla landing. Hamilton, ever the optimist, continued to ask for reinforcements and replacement drafts, unaware of London's growing opposition to the campaign.

The campaign received an unexpected boost when France offered a new army of four divisions scheduled to land on Asiatic Turkey. Hamilton was so elated at the prospect of renewing the offensive that he offered to subordinate himself to the new French commander, General Sarrail. This euphoria was short lived when France's General Joffe delayed these troops' arrival until November. Towards the end of September, Bulgaria joined the Central Powers and mobilized against Serbia. The Allies' only option to counter this situation was to attack Bulgaria through Greece. To secure Greece's help, England and France promised two divisions to the forces concentrating at Salonika. Ironically, Greece, upon seeing the 1st French and 10th British Divisions leave Gallipoli for Salonika, thought England was abandoning the campaign and decided to extend her neutrality.<sup>108</sup>

Following the failed September offensive in France, which resulted in a quarter million casualties, the Dardanelles Committee readdressed the question of the four French divisions. The debate devolved to the issue of supporting a continued campaign in Gallipoli or a new campaign in Solonika. The Salonika option was gaining support because of the stalemate on the Gallipoli Peninsula and because Hamilton's force was down to half-strength. On 11 October, Kitchener cabled Hamilton and asked "What is your estimate of the probable loses which would be entailed to your force if the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula was decided upon and carried out in the most careful manner."<sup>109</sup> Hamilton's response was predictable: "if they do this they make the Dardanelles into the bloodiest tragedy of the world."<sup>110</sup> The next day he replied that, they could expect fifty percent casualties during an evacuation with loss of all the guns and stores ashore. This correspondence signaled the eventual evacuation of Gallipoli. To make matters worse, there was a growing movement within the Cabinet to remove Kitchener, Hamilton's last and most steadfast ally in the War Council.

In October the of the possibility of sending additional forces to Gallipoli was resurrected and with it came the final debate on evacuation. The result of this debate within the Dardanelles Committee was that on 11 October they decided "a specially selected general should proceed without delay to the Near East to consider and report as to the particular sphere and the particular objective to which we should direct our attention."<sup>111</sup> The Committee selected General Sir Charles Monro, who departed England on 22 October for the Gallipoli Peninsula.

On 14 October, the hammer fell. The Government of Great Britain decided to recall General Sir Ian Hamilton and appointed General Monro in his place. Monro received instructions from Kitchener to report "fully and frankly" on the military position. In addition, Monro "was instructed to consider the best means of removing the existing deadlock and to report whether, in his opinion, on purely military grounds, it was better to evacuate Gallipoli or to make another attempt to carry it." The Committee also directed him to evaluate potential casualties in the event of an evacuation.

General Monro arrived at Gallipoli and immediately toured the three fronts. On 31 October, he cabled Kitchener with his findings: 1.) Except for the ANZAC troops, current forces were not capable of sustained operation, owing to inexperienced officers, lack of training, and depleted conditions of the units. 2.) The tactical situation only allowed for costly frontal attacks. 3.) Any attempt to take Turkish positions will fail. 4.) Recommend the evacuation of the peninsula. On 1 November, Kitchener asked Monro if all the Corps commanders concurred with his findings. General Byng, IX Corps, and General Davies, VIII Corps, both agreed with Monro. Only Birdwood opposed evacuation, and then only on the grounds that such a defeat would have serious repercussions in the Near East, not on any prospect of success.

On 3 November, the Cabinet and the War Committee, which had replaced the Dardanelles Committee on 7 October, "invited Lord Kitchener to go to the Mediterranean in order to assist them in arriving at a final decision."<sup>112</sup> Ironically, Kitchener, the man who reluctantly acquiesced to the use of troops in the Dardanelles expedition, secretly telegraphed Birdwood about his pending arrival. His tone is almost conspiratorial:

You know the report sent in by Monro. I shall come out to you; am leaving tomorrow night. I have seen Capt Keyes, and I believe the Admiralty will agree to making naval attempt to force the passage of the straits. We must do what we can do to assist them, and I think that as soon as our ships are in the sea of Marmora we should seize the Bulair Isthmus and hold it to as to supply the Navy if the Turks still hold out.

Examine very carefully the best position for landing near the marsh at the head of the Gulf of Xeros, so that we could get a line across the isthmus, with ships at both sides...

As regards to military command, you would have the whole force, and should carefully select your commanders and troops... We must do it right this time...

I absolutely refuse to sign orders for evacuation, which I think would be the gravest disaster and would condemn a large percentage of our men to death or imprisonment.

Monro will be appointed to command of the Salonika force.<sup>113</sup>

After arriving on the peninsula, Kitchener conducted a first-hand inspection of the fronts and reconsidered his position on evacuation. His major findings, which he cabled to London on 15 November, were: 1.) The country (terrain) is more formidable than originally thought, and greatly benefited the defender. 2.) Landings are precarious due to lack of harbors, and command and control is difficult owing to the detachment of the headquarters located on Mudros. 3.) The navy could probably never force the Narrows. 4.) Troops are well protected and are tying up 125,000 Turkish troops. 5.) The *raison d'être* for the troops to be on Gallipoli is no longer as important as it was earlier. 6.) While secretly planning for evacuation, he wanted to retain the Cape Helles lodgment as support for the fleet.<sup>114</sup>

On 23 November, the War Committee decided that: "Having regard to the opinions expressed by Lord Kitchener ..., the War committee feel bound to advise the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula on military grounds, notwithstanding the grave political disadvantages which may result from the decision. They have carefully examined the naval considerations in favor of the retention of Cape Helles..."<sup>115</sup>

As the leaders in London anguished over the decision to evacuate, nature weighed in: On 27 November, a blizzard and thunderstorm swept the peninsula. The violent, cold weather lasted two weeks and destroyed many of the makeshift piers and shelters, and causing several thousand casualties. The November storm was a cruel capstone to a campaign that inflicted so much misery upon the men who had fought it over the past seven months.

The problem facing the planners was how to evacuate 50,000 men, 3,000 animals, and 91 guns from Suvla; 41,000 men, 2300 animals, and 105 guns from ANZAC; and 42,600 men, 9200 animals, and 197 guns from Helles. And this had to be accomplished under the nose of an enemy that at some places was only yards away. Birdwood's staff recognized that to be successful, they must convince the Turks that they held their defensive lines in great strength until the very last moment. The plan they developed and its subsequent execution stands to this day as the greatest example of amphibious withdrawal in military history.

The evacuation consisted of three phases. During the preliminary stage, which began even before London gave final approval, the garrison was sufficiently reduced to conduct a

defensive winter campaign. Following the approval for evacuation, the intermediate stage would begin to reduce personnel to the minimum required to hold the defensive line for about a week. The final stage called for the rapid evacuation of all remaining troops.

The withdrawal from Suvla and ANZAC began early December with ships back-loading ammunition and stores during the night. To keep up the appearance of normalcy, troops would loiter in rear areas and man the now vacant medical and supply areas. Commanders maintained regular artillery fires, patrols, and other military action the Turks had come to expect. One ingenious part of the plan was the idea of "silent stunts." These were periods of silence and no activity intended as a type of Turkish "behavior modification." Soldiers devised other clever devices and methods to fool the enemy. ANZAC troops fashioned self-firing rifle and cannon and wrapped the hooves of their animals to muffle their movements. The main concern among the troops during the evacuation was about leaving dead comrades behind.

The first phase of evacuation was completed by 8 December, and the second by the 18th. On 19 December, the final phase of withdrawing forces from Suvla-ANZAC began. Three embarkation points were established for the evacuation: Northern Suvla, Southern Suvla, and Anzac North beach. At 0130 the front line of Northern Suvla departed for their embarkation points, followed by the second and third lines at 0200. The last line and rear guards left at 0400 and 0430, when the evacuation of Northern Suvla was completed. Southern Suvla evacuated in the same manner on almost the same timetable; it was completed by 0400. Anzac was the most difficult since the Turkish lines were only 800 yards from the embarkation point. The embarkation ran ahead of schedule and the positions that had been won so hard were abandoned one by one — Lone Pine, Quinn's Post, The Apex, and all the others that have come to represent the Gallipoli struggle. By 0410, it was over. The last man was off the beach and the Suvla-Anzac evacuation was complete without the loss of a man.

On 3 December 1915, Sir William Robertson replaced General Wolfe Murray as chief of the Imperial General Staff. He quickly declared that there was nothing to be gained by retaining the Cape Helles lodgment. He also brought discipline to the War Department, insisting, before accepting the post that all orders are issued by him and not the Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener. On 24 December, he directed General Monro to make all preparation for the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula.

General Birdwood, who was appointed commander of Dardanelles Forces when Monro was elevated to Commander Mediterranean Forces, planned to complete the intermediate stage by January 8th and the final stage the following night. The evacuation was helped by the removal of the remaining French forces, which were relieved by the Royal Naval Division by

warship in early January. The final embarkation was almost thwarted by Liman Von Sanders, who was unaware of the ongoing evacuation. He planned to straighten the Turkish lines on 7 January. Fortunately, it was a weak attempt and the Turks were beaten back with few Allied casualties. In spite of worsening weather, the evacuation of Cape Helles concluded at 0330 on 9 January 1916. Thus the Dardanelles campaign ended and recriminations began.

## **LESSONS LEARNED – CONCLUSIONS**

The responsibility for failure of the Dardanelles campaign has been laid at the feet of almost every commander and politician involved with the tragic expedition. Some blame Churchill for dreaming up such a quixotic adventure, some General Hamilton for being an observer of commanders rather than the Commander-in-Chief, while others hold Stopford responsible for his lack of aggressiveness and Kitchener for his strategic indecisiveness. Some would argue it was not a failure at all. It succeeded in occupying several hundred thousand Turks who could have been employed elsewhere. Arguably the measure of its success resides somewhere in the middle. It failed to achieve its military goals of controlling the Narrows to allow passage of warships through the straits to seize Constantinople. It also failed to woo Bulgaria and Greece into the Allies' camp. And it was executed after the Russian crisis of December 1914 had passed.

In a war where battles were measured in hundreds of thousands of casualties, the loss of 145,000 almost seems inconsequential. However, all casualties were fodder for the Westerners who dominated the highest level of Britain defense structure and they used them to forward their agenda and undermine the campaign. The Dardanelles plan indeed reflects strategic brilliance in a war of stalemate and attrition. Its goal to offset the balance of power in Europe in favor of the Allies could have arguably succeeded in ending the war years earlier, instead of its eventual end in November 1918. However, the campaign failed to achieve its operational goals and thus strategic decision was never realized. Failure can be attributed to several causes:

### Strategic level -

1. Lack of strategic vision, unity, and will in the Cabinet and War Council: This lack of strategic consensus ultimately led to the Allies drifting into and through the campaign.
2. Domination of the Westerners' philosophy: The focus of the "military elite" on the Western Front and support to France resulted in piecemealing forces, along with reluctance to include the requisite drafts and replacements to account for casualties.

3. Failure of the leadership to ask and answer questions concerning how a Navy-only option would cause the fall of Constantinople. Blind acceptance of the Navy's claim delayed assembly of ground forces and allowed the Turks to prepare defenses.

4. Strategic indecision: This delayed the initial deployment of the 29th Division and subsequent reinforcement to the peninsula, allowing the Turks ample time to refit and reinforce.

Operational level -

1. Hamilton's failure to drive the campaign and influence subordinate commanders: This was the most damaging operational weakness. Hamilton's failure to coordinate and control the actions of his subordinate commanders resulted in lost opportunities and in squandering the synergistic effects of coordinated action.

2. Lack of operational security.

3. Poor campaign planning by a staff that had only one month to coordinate a complex amphibious attack.

4. Long lines of logistics and communications.

5. Failure to plan for a coordinated joint campaign.

6. Failure to coordinate action against the enemy between the two (later three) operational areas.

7. Archaic and moribund command selection system.

8. Unrealistic appraisal of the Turkish fighting spirit and capabilities.

9. Woeful lack of artillery: The 53rd and 54th Divisions arrived with no artillery at all.

10. Logistics system that could not support the size of force. An inadequate supply of water significantly affected the operational deployment and employment of forces.

11. Inadequate amphibious landing craft.

The bottom line is that Great Britain's strategic leaders could not decide whether they wanted to conduct a viable campaign in the east. Once they did, they did not do so with vigor or commitment. Also, Hamilton lost sight of his operational goal (the Narrows) and quickly fell into a "winning ground" doldrums. He failed to synchronize his actions with the Navy. The one major lesson learned by the allies following the operation was ironically the wrong one - that amphibious operations were not practical in "modern warfare." Gallipoli was not a failure of amphibious operations; rather it was a failure of strategic and operational leadership. The lessons learned during the April landings were applied during the Suvla landings in August to include the use of surprise and armored landing craft (the beetles), monitors for fire support ships, and aircraft spotting. All these advantages were mitigated by Stopford's inaction and lack

of urgency, by the lack of drafts and replacements for battle losses, and by Hamilton's unimaginative plan that did not focus on the operational center of gravity – The Narrows.

Gallipoli is arguably the first amphibious operation in modern warfare. Careful study of it has served as the foundation for modern amphibious doctrine. Its examination still provides food for thought on strategic decision-making, campaign planning, and joint combined operations. As forward bases U.S. forces decrease worldwide, the potential use of amphibious forces to achieve operational objectives is more relevant than ever. The tactical failure at Gallipoli should not detract from the strategic promise the campaign held. Power projection is no less viable today than it was in 1915; operational and tactical competence no less important.

Word count = 16,867



## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Henry Nevison, The Dardanelles Campaign (New York, N.Y.: Henry Holt and Company, 1919), 23.

<sup>2</sup> Eric Bush, Gallipoli (London: George, Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1975), 28.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Dardanelles Commission, First Report of the Dardanelles Commission, (London, HMSO, 1917), 5.

<sup>6</sup> Nevison, 15.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Fred R Hertesveldt, The Dardanelles Campaign, 1915 - Historiography and Annotated Bibliography, (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press), 1997, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Nevison, 9.

<sup>10</sup> Geoffrey Penn, Fisher, Churchill and the Dardanelles. (Great Britain: Leo Cooper, 1999), 110. Greece eventually joined the Allies in July 1917.

<sup>11</sup> Dardanelles Commission, First Report, 14.

<sup>12</sup> Bush, 32.

<sup>13</sup> Dardanelles Commission, First Report, 14.

<sup>14</sup> Penn, 121.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 122.

<sup>16</sup> Dardanelles Commission, First Report, 13.

<sup>17</sup> Walter H. Johnson, "The Dardanelles Expedition." (The Coast Artillery Journal; repr., The Army War College, Washington Barracks, D.C., 1923), 2

<sup>18</sup> Bush, 32.

<sup>19</sup> Penn, 117.

<sup>20</sup> Bush, 32.

<sup>21</sup> Penn, 118.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Dardanelles Commission, First Report, 16.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>25</sup> Penn, 124.

<sup>26</sup> Dardanelles Commission, First Report, 18.

<sup>27</sup> Puleston, 16.

<sup>28</sup> Dardanelles Commission, First Report, 23.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>30</sup> Alan Moorhead, Gallipoli (New York, NY: Ballantine, 1956), 39.

<sup>31</sup> Bush, 37.

<sup>32</sup> Moorehead, 54.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>34</sup> Nevison, 43.

<sup>35</sup> Puleston, 30.

<sup>36</sup> Dardanelles Commission, First Report, 31.

<sup>37</sup> Nevison, 32.

<sup>38</sup> Bush, 41.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>40</sup> Dardanelles Commission, First Report, 34.

<sup>41</sup> Moorhead, 80.

<sup>42</sup> Bush, 65.

<sup>43</sup> Dardanelles Commission, First Report, 34.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Liman Von Sanders, The Dardanelles Campaign. Trans. by Colonel E. H. Schultz (The Engineer School, Fort Humphreys, VA, 1931), 3

<sup>46</sup> Nevison, 59

<sup>47</sup> Puleson, 52

<sup>48</sup> Dardanelles Commission, First Report, 37

<sup>49</sup> Moorehead, 104

<sup>50</sup> Puleston, 58

<sup>51</sup> Moorehead, 16.

<sup>52</sup> Sherman Miles, "Notes on the Dardanelles Campaign of 1915." (The Coast Artillery Journal; repr., The U.S. Army Military History Institute), 81.

<sup>53</sup> Dardanelles Commission, Final Report of the Dardanelles Commission, (London, HMSO, 1917), 18.

<sup>54</sup> Dardanelles Commission, Final Report, 18.

<sup>55</sup> Johnson, 14.

<sup>56</sup> Dardanelles Commission, Final Report, 18.

<sup>57</sup> Moorehead, 129.

<sup>58</sup> Mustafa Kemal went on to become president of Modern Turkey (1923 –1938) and assumed the name Attaturk.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 139.

<sup>60</sup> Bush, 108.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 108.

<sup>63</sup> Moorehead, 145.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 146.

<sup>65</sup> Puleson, 75.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>68</sup> Moorehead, 105.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 160.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 161.

<sup>71</sup> Puleson, 92.

<sup>72</sup> Moorehead, 163.

<sup>73</sup> Nevison, 146.

<sup>74</sup> Dardanelles Commission, Final Report, 21.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Student. The Gallipoli Campaign – An Outline of the Military Operations, (London. Sifton, praed & Co., Ltd., 1923), 44.

<sup>77</sup> Miles, 82.

<sup>78</sup> Dardanelles Commission, Final Report, 24.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>80</sup> Moorehead, 238.

<sup>81</sup> Michael Hickey. Gallipoli. (London: John Murray, Ltd., 1998), 225.

<sup>82</sup> Student, 54.

<sup>83</sup> Miles, 58.

<sup>84</sup> Hickey, 237.

<sup>85</sup> Miles, 58.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 72.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 82.

<sup>88</sup> Hickey, 240.

<sup>89</sup> Dardanelles Commission, Final Report, 120.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 121.

<sup>91</sup> Hickey, 250.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 251.

<sup>93</sup> Dardanelles Commission, Final Report, 122.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>95</sup> Puleston, 126.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 126.

<sup>97</sup> Moorehead, 246.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 254.

<sup>99</sup> Hickey, 274.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 291.

<sup>101</sup> Nevison, 315.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 316.

<sup>103</sup> Puleson, 134.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 136.

<sup>105</sup> Nevison, 328.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 336.

<sup>107</sup> Hickey, 304.

<sup>108</sup> Moorehead, 302.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 303.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Dardanelles Commission, Final report, 53.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 57.

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